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PRACTISING REFORM IN MONTAIGNE'S *ESSAIS*

BY

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>A</i>	<i>Der Antichrist</i>
<i>EH</i>	<i>Ecce Homo</i>
<i>FW</i>	<i>Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>G</i>	<i>Götzendämmerung</i>
<i>GM</i>	<i>Zur Genealogie der Moral</i>
<i>GT</i>	<i>Die Geburt der Tragödie</i>
<i>JGB</i>	<i>Jenseits von Gut und Böse</i>
<i>KGB</i>	<i>Kritische Gesamtausgabe</i>
<i>KSA</i>	<i>Kritische Studienausgabe</i>
<i>M</i>	<i>Morgenröte</i>
<i>MA</i>	<i>Menschliches, Allzumenschliches</i>
<i>UB</i>	<i>Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen</i>
<i>W</i>	<i>Der Fall Wagner</i>
<i>Z</i>	<i>Also sprach Zarathustra</i>

INTRODUCTION

Michel de Montaigne is a seminal figure not only for the sixteenth century but for the French literary tradition generally. His impact reaches beyond France to the wider European literary traditions. This analysis therefore focuses on six topics of research that are particularly relevant not only for Montaigne's writing but also for the late sixteenth century: the genre of the essay, its style, pedagogy, politics, religion, and historiography. Accordingly, I have considered each topic with regard to Montaigne as well as with regard to the sixteenth-century context. This enables me to point out the innovative aspects of the *Essais*.

The further we are removed in time from the composition of a literary work of art the more we rely on a specific tradition of interpretation. In Foucauldian terms, we regard an author's name as a means of classification; his presence is functional and his name characterizes a particular kind of discourse.¹ For the Montaigne studies of this century, the author function has been much determined by Pierre Villey as well as by the tradition that sees the humanist as an icon of sincerity. I propose in the following chapters to change this image, to resituate Montaigne in the sixteenth century, and, so to speak, to recontextualize a mythical author.

In my study of the innovative elements in the *Essais*, Friedrich Nietzsche influences my critical approach. Such an alliance might surprise us, but my approach is justified by the fact that contemporary research has neglected Montaigne's influence on Nietzsche, while Montaigne scholars have been equally hesitant to uncover the Nietzschean elements that we find in the *Essais*. Nietzsche's attitude toward his literary precursors corresponds to the humanists' attitude toward their classical sources; it is the attitude of a double gesture - that of rejection, because it wants to separate itself from its immediate past in order to, then, search for ancient roots. This correspondence permits me to go beyond most of the extant literature on the relationship between Nietzsche and Montaigne, which revolves around two points, that is, skepticism and "joie de vivre".

¹ M. Foucault, "What is an author?" originally appeared in the *Bulletin de la Société française de Philosophie* in 1969.

Contrary to many comparative studies and studies that apply modern criticism to canonical texts I am not engaging in a Nietzschean reading of Montaigne nor am I offering to point out the Dionysian or Apollinian elements in the *Essais*. I do not intend to read Nietzsche and therefore Montaigne through the lens of postmodernism, but, in order to legitimize my approach, I take advantage of the presence of Nietzsche in much modern criticism, namely Foucault, Blanchot, Bataille, Klossowski, Derrida, and Deleuze.² To this purpose, I will insert Montaigne in a time line with Augustine as well as Montaigne's immediate precursors on one side, and with Nietzsche on the other side. Yet the point of departure for my analysis is Montaigne's own account of how to enter any relationship, be it amical, political, literary, or critical:

Il en peut estre aucuns de ma complexion, qui m'instruis mieux par contrariété que par exemple, et par fuite que par suite.

There may be others of my complexion who learn better by counterexample than by example, by eschewing, not pursuing (1044),

he says in "De l'art de conferer" (III 8, 899 b), where we also find:

Quand on me contrarie, on esveille mon attention, non pas ma cholere; je m'avance vers celui qui me contredit, qui m'instruit. La cause de la verité devroit estre la cause commune à l'un et à l'autre (III 8, 902 b).

When I am contradicted it arouses my attention not my wrath. I move towards the man who contradicts me: he is instructing me. The cause of truth ought to be common to us both (1047).³

The active interpretation which Nietzsche can be said to venture is here suggested by Montaigne himself. In each chapter Nietzsche therefore will be present as Montaigne's implied reader. Yet it is necessary to remain wary of Nietzsche, who is a self-willed and unconventional reader and

² J. Le Rider, "Nietzsche et la France. Présences de Nietzsche en France", in: *Friedrich Nietzsche. Oeuvres*, vol. 1, XI-CXII gives a good survey, while A. Schrift, *Nietzsche's French Legacy* concentrates on Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze, and Cixous.

³ A similar controversial approach is found in a draft for *Ecce Homo* concerning *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, where Nietzsche writes: "Die Nachwirkung dieser Schrift ist geradezu unschätzbar in meinem Leben. Ich hatte, ohne sie zu kennen, eine Maxime Stendhals in praxis übersetzt: seinen Eintritt in die Gesellschaft mit einem Duell zu machen" (KSA 14, 488).

sometimes misinterprets by his very manner of writing, as can be seen in his adaptations of Pascal, Voltaire, or Emerson.⁴

Chapter 1 (An Art of Synthesis in Montaigne's Essay) defines the personal essay as a written conversation. The essay "De l'art de conferer" (III 8) here serves as a paradigm. On the basis of an (im)moralistic synthesis of several sources, the most important being Plutarch's moral treatises (Jacques Amyot: *Les oeuvres morales et meslees de Plutarque*), Platonic and humanistic dialogues (Baldassar Castiglione: *Il libro del Cortegiano*), and elements of anti-Italianism (Henri Estienne: *Deux dialogues du nouveau langage françois italianizé*; Bonaventure Des Périers: *Cymbalum Mundi*; Jacques Tahureau: *Les dialogues*) the essay discusses contemporary issues. The controversial nature of those issues is rendered inoffensive by what in Nietzschean terms might be called a transparent, that is, non-hermetic manner of writing. Thus emerges a genre that more than any other text thrives on the interaction of personal (affirmed) and public (negated) exigencies, as is shown by a comparison with the aphorism.

Chapter 2 (Complexion as Style and Physiology) presents the most prominent trait of the personal essay, Montaigne's physiological style, in a contrastive reading with Nietzsche's multiplicity of styles. It rejects the rules of contemporary style manuals that advocate Platonism and Ciceronianism (Joachim Du Bellay, Jacques Pelletier du Mans, Thomas Sebillet, Pontus de Tyard, Pierre de Ronsard) in order to create a human complexion by means of a verbal texture grounded in Montaigne's physical aspects.

Chapter 3 (Teaching Judgment - Setting Example against Metaphor) chooses metaphor, one element from this physiological style, and explains how Montaigne invents a way to teach what is unteachable, that is, judgment. Nietzsche's texts on metaphor here serve as a theory. Several of Montaigne's contemporary readers (Jacques Tabourot: *Bigarrures*; Marie de Gournay: *Préface*; Pierre Charron: *De la Sagesse*) then illustrate that Montaigne himself must be seen as calling into question his own pedagogical agenda, because his metaphorical style, by escaping the limits of

⁴ Nietzsche sees Pascal as a figure whose ideal state of being is being-beside-oneself (KSA 9, 372: 7[262]) and whose intellectual honesty (KSA 5, 45) made him the most instructive victim of Christianity (KSA 6, 285). Voltaire is the greatest liberator of the spirit (KSA 2, 10). Emerson, a Montaignean himself, is appreciated for his happiness and for his serenity (KSA 6, 120) that is also a characteristic trait of Montaigne (KSA 1, 348).

practical teaching conveyed by history or morality (the example), creates a self-reflective text.

Chapter 4 (Interpreting Montaigne's Political Texts) maintains that Montaigne's personal retreat, which is constructed as a textual retreat in the essay, comes to serve as an additional strategy that will allow the author to criticize contemporary politics through a personalized, fictitious, yet always compromised self. In between Machiavelli's dissimulation, Gentillet's rejection of dissimulation, and Nietzschean individualism, Montaigne's writing figures as reasonable dissimulation. Etienne de La Boétie (*De la servitude volontaire*), François de La Noue (*Discours politiques et militaires*), and François Hotman (*Le tigre, Franco-Gallia*) here provide the context that explains the necessity of Montaigne's retreat.

Chapter 5 (Adiaphora) shows how Montaigne, protected by the notion of adiaphora, sets skepticism against fideism, while engaging in the emerging discussion on science. The Copernican discoveries cause the author to reevaluate the human being's position through an atomistic view of the universe. Similar to Nietzsche's active nihilist, Montaigne criticizes contemporary science and proposes to transform the scientific method into an art of living.

Chapter 6 (History and Autobiography) defines the *Essais* as an autobiographical text that writes history; thus, the study of theology or Scripture is replaced by a "historia magistra vitae" in so far as it teaches the human being to endure the experience of contingency. Autobiographical writing, then, emerges from an interactive process that involves experience, the book or personal library, and memory. Montaigne is here situated between Augustine, Dante, Petrarch, and Nietzsche; writing history thus means drawing a portrait of the self in the process of becoming what one is or, in a far-reaching interpretation of Nietzsche's art of living, of becoming other than what one is.

My pairing of Montaigne and Nietzsche, which at a first glance may seem paradoxical, is based on Nietzsche's being a historical reader of the *Essais* as well as one of Montaigne's most enthusiastic admirers in literary history. Nietzsche's first recorded acquaintance with Montaigne dates from Christmas 1870, when he was given a German translation of the complete *Essais* by Cosima and Richard Wagner.⁵ In unpublished notes

⁵ December 30 1870, Tribschen, letter to Franziska and Elisabeth Nietzsche: "Zu Weihnachten bekam ich ein prachtvolles Exemplar des "Beethoven", dann eine stattliche Ausgabe des ganzen Montaigne (den ich sehr verehere) und - etwas ganz Einziges - das erste Exemplar vom Klavierauszug des Siegfried". The *Essais* are a translation by Johann Daniel Tietz (Leipzig, 1853/54).

from Nietzsche's early time in Basel, Montaigne is later mentioned as having a salutary effect on him, a judgment which will be repeated in notes from 1876.⁶ In a letter from September 20, 1884, Nietzsche asks his sister for the first of three volumes of his German translation of Montaigne to be sent.⁷ In a letter to Peter Gast from Nizza he writes on October 27, 1887, that he was reading Montaigne in order to improve his mood.⁸ Finally, Nietzsche is reading Montaigne's *Essais* again in November and December 1887.⁹ From the written proof that we possess it can be inferred that Montaigne is not only a formative influence in the early seventies, as has been maintained often, but that he is also important for the transition period at the end of the seventies and even beyond the composition of *Menschliches. Allzumenschliches*. Nietzsche, thus, is a mediator who is not only a kindred spirit, but also, as is Montaigne, an expert in the topics that are discussed in this book.

In the analyses of my six chapters I will keep in mind two sides of a time line: at the moment of their first appearance, the *Essais* were read with the reading experience of the humanists.¹⁰ In contrast, Nietzsche's interpretation of the nineteenth century is both based on and opposed to Romantic literary theory. In my own reading I therefore use a hermeneutical model that considers the literary text, in this case the *Essais*, as a work of art whose interpretation is dependent on the commentator's historical consciousness as well as on historical mediation; in other words, the text belongs to its own world yet is magically able to transcend timespans by its own inherent meaning.¹¹ This dialogical understanding will enable me to portray Montaigne as modern in so far as he takes up thoughts that emerge with the Reformation. Montaigne will be read in the perspective of Nietzsche, but Nietzsche will be used as an interpretative means only where he contributes to a better or novel understanding of specific concepts or strategies of writing in the *Essais*.

In the following pages I will give a survey of the literature on the relationship between Nietzsche and Montaigne - which has not been exten-

⁶ "Erleichterung des Lebens" (V. Vivarelli, "Montaigne und der 'Freie Geist'", note 10 and 11).

⁷ ("steht im Kabinett unter den guten Büchern, ein alter Schmöcker") (KGB III 1, 536).

⁸ "Lieber Freund, eben langt Ihr Brief an; ich las Montaigne, um mich aus einer grilg-düsteren und gereizten Stimmung zu ziehen - Ihr Brief half mir *gründlicher* noch davon".

⁹ KSA 15, 167.

¹⁰ O. Millet, *La première réception des 'Essais' de Montaigne*.

¹¹ H.-G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 170.

sively debated - in order to summarize the points of convergence and of difference that a discussion of the two authors will raise as well as in order to outline the questions that have already been researched.

Montaigne and Nietzsche

“[...] dass ich Etwas von Montaigne’s Muthwillen im Geiste, wer weiss? vielleicht auch im Leibe habe” (“that I have in my spirit - who knows? perhaps also in my body - something of Montaigne’s sportiveness”); this quotation, which is found in *Ecce Homo* (KSA 6, 285), proves Nietzsche’s love for the unorthodox element in the *Essais*, for the imperceptibly subversive turn of a phrase or the slyly ironic tone of a passage. A similar intellectual and physiological disposition, a resemblance as among family members is another reason for Nietzsche’s choosing Montaigne to be one of his favorite authors. In addition to its being a predilection, the presence of this author in Nietzsche’s personal anthology also represents a critical act based on the desire to imitate or to contradict Montaigne, to accept his style, teaching and moral attitude or to counterbalance them by a performative critique. The nature of the relationship is difficult to determine, because the traits that might make Montaigne a prominent figure in Nietzsche’s text (apart from the direct citations) are exactly the ones which Nietzsche either internalizes completely or overdraws the most. Whether Nietzsche is speaking as the Montaigne of the nineteenth century or in the mask of a counterfigure is sometimes difficult to establish. The following pages give a survey of the critical literature available from the present to its beginning in 1917 on this literary relationship.

The most recent and the most sophisticated of the studies undertaken so far is a comparative reading by Nicola Panichi, entitled *Picta historia. Lettura di Montaigne e Nietzsche* (1995). Panichi’s argument rests on a definition of the Montaignean self as constituted by language; Montaigne’s preoccupation with history results from a written interpretation of a series of examples, which in their abundance lose their exemplarity. This creates a negative view of history. Yet Montaigne is interested in the experience of consciousness, in the description of being as passage, in phenomenology. On the one hand, these interests cause him to reject the notion of wisdom; on the other hand, they lead him to develop an art of living, an aesthetics of manners.

Panichi’s point of departure is the art of conversation (III 8). On recently reading the study it seemed similar to my own approach; however,

Panichi attaches more importance to the sociological dimension and to Montaigne's Italian precursors. Conversation becomes a means to discover the other as well as a paradigm of the human being's way of life in general. According to the French humanist, language is the ontological link of man, a mimesis of reality; speaking is communicating, communicating is being. Such total communication existed between the author and La Boétie, after whose death it is replaced by the *Essais*. Much of the first part of Panichi's reading is dedicated to quite simply giving a survey of quotes from the *Essais*. In the second part of this comparison, Panichi presents Nietzsche as a consubstantial reader of Montaigne and *Ecce Homo* as a Montaignean self-portrait. Having reminded his readers in the first part of many well-known passages, Panichi can now suggest parallels between Nietzsche's thoughts on becoming what one is, ethics and aesthetics, style, personality, knowledge, tradition and invention and similar thoughts in the *Essais*. In juxtaposing both author's texts, Panichi shows how Montaigne's stylistic versatility becomes Nietzsche's music and polemics, how Montaigne's definition of truth as illusion becomes a total lack of truth, how both writers have a similar love for solitude, an interest in genealogy and its physiological effects, an interest in pedagogy, how they define the individual as a being in flux, how they allot a similar place to the human being in the universe.¹²

Vivetta Vivarelli's article "Montaigne und der 'Freie Geist', Nietzsche im Übergang" (1994) determines the end of the 1870's as a transition in Nietzsche's career. These years mark his emancipation from Wagner and metaphysics through an increasing occupation with the French moralists. Vivarelli traces the genealogy of Nietzsche's concept of the freethinker as found in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*. At its root she discovers the confrontation of Montaigne's immanent world view - religion is cultural heritage - with Pascal's consciously religious one - religion is a basic human need despite the agonizing inner struggles it causes.

According to Vivarelli, the problem of the freethinker begins to interest Nietzsche in *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen I*, where he means to outdo the first German freethinker, David Friedrich Strauss, in the *persona* of the immoralist.¹³ Nietzsche's concept seems to be fully established in

¹² For some additional pages with regard to the relationship between Nietzsche and Montaigne which I have not included in my survey, see *Picta historia*, p. 156 n. 3. See also a recent note by P. Mari in *Bulletin des Amis de Montaigne* (no 35-36, Janvier-Juin 1994) pp. 29-33.

¹³ "Die Nachwirkung dieser Schrift ist geradezu unschätzbar in meinem Leben. Ich hatte, ohne sie zu kennen, eine Maxime Stendhals in praxis übersetzt: seinen Eintritt in

Vermischte Meinungen und Sprüche and *Morgenröte*; yet in the subtitle to *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* the author already uses the term “free spirit”. Although the book is dedicated to Voltaire, Vivarelli claims Montaigne as the inspiration for this particular notion of freethinker.

It is Nietzsche’s reading of Montaigne that may have prepared the ground for his personal reception of the later French moralists and that may actually have led him to become a moralist himself. With the help of the philosopher’s personal correspondence and the posthumously published fragments from the summer of 1876, Vivarelli fixes a time frame for Nietzsche’s thorough reading of the *Essais* and his ensuing development of the concept of freethinker.¹⁴ The Montaigne image emerging from the fragments displays an unquenchable thirst for personal and political liberty. The freedom motif is illustrated with the symbol of the journey,¹⁵ a sign of intellectual curiosity and flexibility which is typical of Nietzsche’s good European.¹⁶ The freethinker (“esprit écarté”) distinguishes himself from his contemporaries by seeking out a way of thinking that will be different from the one encountered.

die Gesellschaft mit einem D u e l l zu machen. Und ich hatte mir einen Gegner gewählt, der mich als den errathen konnte, der ich bin, -ich hatte den ersten Freigeist der Deutschen herausgefordert und ihn a u s g e l a c h t- Eine neue Freigeisterei kam damit zum Ausdruck, nicht mehr bloss eine antitheologische, [für die] etwas Fremdes, für das den Deutschen [„zuletzt nicht nur den deutschen,] das Ohr, der Begriff und selbst das Wort gefehlt [haben] hat. Heute haben sie das Wort: ich gab es ihnen - I m m o r a l i s t...” (KSA 14, 488). The immoralist is closely related to the French moralist and, despite his liberation from the religious tradition, can still claim religious allies on his side. He is also related to the religious *libertin*, who refuses the dogmatism of official creeds.

¹⁴ In particular one letter written to Cosima Wagner on December 19 1876 in which Nietzsche announces the death of Ritschl, Gerlach, and his grandmother and takes leave of some ideas and ideals: “[...] werden Sie sich wundern, wenn ich Ihnen eine allmählich entstandene, mir fast plötzlich in’s Bewusstsein getretene Differenz mit Schopenhauer’s Lehre eingestehe? Ich stehe fast in allen allgemeinen Sätzen nicht auf seiner Seite; schon als ich über Sch. schrieb, merkte ich, dass ich über alles Dogmatische dann hinweg sei; mir lag alles am M e n s c h e n. In der Zwischenzeit ist meine “Vernunft” sehr thätig gewesen - damit ist denn das Leben wieder um einen Grad schwieriger, die Last grösser geworden! Wie wird man’s nur am Ende aushalten?” (Vivarelli, 4).

¹⁵ Montaigne’s journey to Rome in 1580/81.

¹⁶ Montaigne does not like close identification, both with regard to his office or to people. Linked to this is the motive of distance, which permits him to look at everyday life with ever fresh eyes. This attitude is transferred to the realm of politics, friendship, and marriage. The fact that a free spirit regards intellectual proliferation as the highest form of life is only one of its many possible implications. The opposite moral type is the bound spirit, who accepts religion and custom without examining them first. Vivarelli mainly refers to the essay “De la vanité” (III 9).

In juxtaposing quotations from “De mesnager sa volonté” (*Essais* III 10), Pascal’s *Pensées*, and Nietzsche’s fragments, Vivarelli tries to establish a common denominator with regard to the two philosophers’ predilection for contemplative life, for the separation of private and public sphere, for a restricted number of human relationships, for a small fortune and a modest lifestyle in general, and to rediscover all these in *Menschliches*, *Allzumenschliches*. She argues that Montaigne’s compilation of exempla that are adapted in Nietzsche’s text serves to point the way to the freedom of human-all-too-human wisdom.¹⁷ Above all, her comparative analysis provides useful insight into Nietzsche’s technique of writing aphorisms.¹⁸ Her arguments are convincing and it is only toward the end of her article that she limits herself to conjectures and suppositions in trying to catch the Montaignean spirit in individual Nietzschean aphorisms. She concludes by emphasizing the therapeutic function of the *Essais* for Nietzsche. To him they serve as an antidote against Schopenhauerian pessimism and Wagnerian over-estimation of one’s own personality.

Another recent article on the relationship of Nietzsche and Montaigne is David Molner’s “The Influence of Montaigne on Nietzsche: A ‘Raison d’Etre’ in the Sun” (1993). Molner presents Montaigne as one of Nietzsche’s few unscathed heroes. He mentions three aspects of the *Essais*, that establish Nietzsche as Montaigne’s heir: his rendering intellectual relationships in physiological terms, his style, and his authentic self-representation that ultimately prefigures the Nietzschean ideal of the ‘Übermensch’. Montaigne’s philosophy is a depiction of the human condition exemplified by himself, who despite physical discomfort - coincidentally similar to Nietzsche’s - smilingly embraces life with masterful temperance. According to Molner, Montaigne’s advice of linking body and soul, his philosophy of “carpe diem”, provide the models for Nietzsche’s heroic affirmation of eternity and for his notion of eternal recurrence. The latter means “saying yes to all that has been, and approaching each future valuation as if it is to be repeated eternally” (84). The in-

¹⁷ “Es ist übrigens denkbar, dass Nietzsche sich von dem liebenswerten Charakter eines Montaigne angezogen fühlte, der kein Hehl aus seinen menschlich-allzumenschlichen Schwächen machte, der die Erkenntnis, das Leben und die Erde innig liebte, der keine Rancune und keinen Neid hegte und in einer grausamen Zeit seine tiefe Abneigung gegen jegliche Grausamkeit seitens der Kirche, der Tyrannen des Altertums, der spanischen *conquistadores* oder der “menschlichen Gerechtigkeit” klar ausdrückte:[...]” (Vivarelli, 12).

¹⁸ KSA 8, 16[39] and KSA 8, 17[48] refer to Montaigne’s thoughts on the ambition of the quiet life. Vivarelli (10) shows how Nietzsche transforms these passages to aphorisms.

dividual here becomes a constant recreation of the will, independent of moral categories; the impulse for action, that is, for an elevation of the soul, is found in a proper attitude to the body. In a comparison of passages from Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo* and Montaigne's essay "De l'expérience" (III 13), Molner concludes that "Nietzsche's dramatic morality - philosophy born of physiology - metamorphoses the basic motivations of the *Essais*: honest appreciation of immediate, temporal, physical existence, executed by a strong yet self-amused personality" (86).

According to Molner, Montaigne teaches Nietzsche an understanding of style in general through his own rare combination of "style wedded to an already noble (i.e. affirmative) point of view".¹⁹ Nietzsche's primordial value of creativity has its roots in it. The basis for both is the Heraclitean flux of experience, which can be construed as the Dionysian truth at the core of things. Montaigne's auto-performance,²⁰ that results from an understanding of style as ideally performing an authentic transmission of the self, is a model for Nietzsche, who regards his own style as exactly as original for nineteenth-century Germany as Montaigne's style was innovative in sixteenth-century France. Molner identifies the two rhetorical devices of aphorism and aposiopesis as direct Montaignean heirlooms. According to him, it was Montaigne's digressions, insertions, and rhetorical spontaneity that caused Nietzsche to realize the potential of the aphorism and to depart from contemporary scholarly style. The spoken quality of both authors' writing provides another link. Whether deliberate silence is a feature gleaned from Luther's or from Montaigne's texts can only be ascertained in a direct comparison; for Molner, at any rate, it is Montaigne who uses the technique to greater stylistic effect. He concludes by maintaining that the Renaissance philosopher embodies a quiet version of everything that Nietzsche admired and depicts him as a sketch for the 'Übermensch'.

David Molner limits his comparison to the late works of two writers. For any comparative study of Nietzsche and Montaigne, this is the most productive approach because of the testamentary character of both "De l'expérience" and *Ecce Homo*. However, his brief analysis of Nietzsche's notion of creativity based on a Heraclitean/Dionysian world view would situate Montaigne's influence on Nietzsche already in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and would point to new paths in the Nietzsche research. This is

¹⁹ This way of writing unites thought and style, philosophy and the person, and allows words to display their creative force, "to make thoughts advance across a page" (Molner, 87).

²⁰ T. Cave, *The Cornucopian Text*, 273.

even reinforced by Molner's description of Nietzsche's style. He begins his article with the statement that the relationship between Nietzsche and Montaigne is not one of imitation. Yet he does not follow his premise right to the end, where he presents the latter's philosophy as only a less radical Nietzschean attitude. This creates a moderate Montaigne and a very moderate Nietzsche.

Dudley Marchi's article "Vocabularies of Innovation and Repetition in Montaigne, Nietzsche, and de Man" (1992) analyzes Montaigne's reading of contemporary history in "De la coutume" (I 23) through an interpretation of Nietzsche's *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*. It then uses de Man's Montaigne interpretation as found in the two articles "Literary History and Literary Modernity" and "Montaigne et la transcendance" together with de Man's biography in order to redefine both Nietzsche's and Montaigne's attitudes toward history in a discussion of modernism. The problem that Marchi tries to solve is how self-assertion can come into being "while tied to the past's claim to enforce the present" (206).

Marchi uses an expanded notion of modernism, which permits him to create a special intertextual space through a comparative juxtaposition of three epochs; this juxtaposition is based on simple textual affinities. De Man's point of departure is the relation of innovation / 'nouvelletez' / 'inventeurs' with repetition / tradition / 'coustume' / 'imitateurs' in Montaigne's essay, that can be rediscovered as 'Neuheit' / 'kritische' and 'Historie' / 'monumentalische' in Nietzsche's text. The paradoxical interdependence established by such oppositional vocabulary creates a modernist predicament.²¹ In the course of Montaigne's essay the problematic relationship of history and modernity becomes one of historical repetition and the demands of idiosyncratic freedom played out in the field of anti-classical scriptible interaction. Nietzsche's "critical history", a faculty combining the historical and the unhistorical in a dynamic relationship, similar to Montaigne's dualism, contains the seeds of its own upheaval; this is due to the fact that "while in judging and banishing its own past, a society inevitably condemns itself as it is inextricably part of that past" (205).

Both authors use digestive metaphors to describe cultural assimilation. For de Man, this process reads as the absorption of the new into the historical, which has to be resisted by an act of self-assertion. Nietzsche as well as de Man figure as Montaigne's implied competent reader

²¹ For the "modernist predicament" see Marchi, 202 note 6.

("suffisant lecteur"), who recognizes that "Outwardly, Montaigne plays a politically conservative role, yet he is discursively on the side of the 'inventeurs', generating textual structures endowed with innovation and instability. In this sense he weaves surreptitiously into the *Essais* potentially radical aesthetics and politics" (208).

Education is an important topic for both Nietzsche and Montaigne. Both argue that a personality should be developed through a dynamic "interchange with culture" (211). Such an 'unhistorical' use of the 'historical' produces a circular self-destructive yet self-generating process, "continuing the life of the past while enlarging its existence through the development of the self in the present" (211). Both authors are anti-dogmatic, respond to questions in an equivocal manner, thus remaining always in the pursuit of truth, and write about and against themselves. In addition, they analyze the relationship between remembering and forgetting: Nietzsche's act of "critical history" depends on the ability to forget in order to preserve one's creativity; this means to assimilate the past according to genuine individual needs. Both authors fall short of their aim to create a new paradigm that describes the historical moment and are "trapped by their own metaphors and subvert their own positions even as they are victorious in producing an enhanced understanding of the difficulty involved in developing a formula for individual creativeness" (217). What Nietzsche understands through his reading Montaigne is, according to Marchi, that a conscious impulse toward the unhistorical allows us to produce superhistorical configurations.

De Man's intended review of Hugo Friedrich's *Montaigne* turns into an analysis with regard to the author's status as a writer as well as the dualism of transcendence and pure immanence. This dualism is characteristic of dialectical movement between a static equilibrium and infinite reflexions that is found in Montaigne's texts. It is this mobile engagement with the past and the simultaneous ability to express this activity which de Man calls 'modernist' (224). For him, Montaigne's conservatism is purely ritualistic while allowing for the exigencies of subjectivity underneath the textual surface. He refers to Montaigne's equivocal attitude toward the Ligue and to his silence with regard to the massacre of Barthélemy. Modernist writing thus becomes a problem of autobiographical dark points.²²

²² Montaigne, Friedrich, de Man: on the occasion of the English translation of H. Friedrich's book by D. Eng in 1991 R. L. Regosin gave a survey of critical literature in *Philosophy and Literature* 1992 April 16 (1) 134-149. Friedrich's interpretation underlines binaries in Montaigne's text, that of theoretical-practical, internal radicalism-conservative conduct, and above all Montaigne's sense of the individual personality that

Marchi's aim is to bring out the "radical impulse that lurks within the *Essais*",

a text which perpetuates readers to evaluate the monuments of tradition and perennial philosophical debates in a constructional relationship to their own particular personal and historical moments, thereby providing a context in which the ancients and the moderns can converge and develop constructive interactive relationships (229).²³

In *Montaigne among the Moderns* (1994) Marchi includes an elaborate version of his earlier article. He maintains that although the explicit presence of Montaigne in Nietzsche's work is minimal, its impact is substantial (125). Therefore, an inquiry into the transformative role its reception may have played in the development of Nietzsche's thought and writing will be rewarding. According to him, Nietzsche identifies above all with Montaigne's triumphant self-discovery and with his displaying a Heraclitean world-view that will form his concept of the instability of language. Marchi is particularly interested in points of convergence and contrast between the two authors (131). Accordingly, he compares Montaigne's and Nietzsche's notion of modernism by analyzing how Montaigne's concepts infuse modernist dynamics through Nietzsche's adaptation of them and he discusses the direct and indirect nature of this transmission.

According to Brendan Donnellan's article "Nietzsche and Montaigne" (1986), the "personal relationship" between the two authors is based on Nietzsche's appreciation of the humanist's "joyful mastery of life". Donnellan asks whether Nietzsche's writings should be regarded as a document of "triumphant self-discovery" in imitation of Montaigne or whether they constitute an example of bravado and vicarious identification that tries to make a "pathetic case of self-delusion". In a presentation of Nietzsche's direct Montaigne citations, Donnellan traces the development of Nietzsche's image of the humanist: a unique example of the successful

is "independent from the outside world and from whatever might threaten its will" (138). Since Friedrich continued to teach under the Nazi regime, Regosin sees his interpretation of Montaigne as an accommodating portrayal of his own personal situation. In the context of the "scandal in academia" of 1987, the same happens to de Man's interpretation of Montaigne and Nietzsche (See D. Lehman, *Signs of the Time: Deconstruction and the Fall of Paul de Man*).

²³ A critique of Marchi's approach could only be based on taste: in reading his analysis one gets the feeling that Montaigne helps to acquit de Man by becoming a collaborator.

cultivation of personality; a model of the contemplative life; an example of quietism in the process of history; an example of heroism; the heir of Epicurus; a skeptic between "natural boldness" and "prudent deference to orthodoxy" (6).

The second part of Donnellan's article tries to establish "Montaignean currents of thought" in Nietzsche's work. The two main currents are a rejection of dogmatism and an awareness of the impossibility of knowledge. Donnellan situates the dissolution of Nietzsche's concept of truth for the time after the publication of *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, thus disregarding *Über Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinn* and *Über das Pathos der Wahrheit*, in which the author problematizes just that. According to Donnellan, similarities with regard to the treatment of truth are to be found in the middle and later Nietzsche. Both authors also argue for a qualitative approach to knowledge, that is based on a view of human intelligence as flexible and as incapable of understanding phenomena.²⁴

The most important inspiration Nietzsche had from reading the *Essais* is the notion of a personal development. In contrast to Rousseau's self-portrait which he did not accept at face-value, Nietzsche, as Donnellan argues, "never challenges the total veracity of Montaigne's modest self-portrait" (15). This could be due to the fact that from Nietzsche's vantage point of the nineteenth century Romantic he has a bourgeois's nostalgia for the aristocratic spirit of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Unfortunately, Donnellan does not discuss this vantage point, but instead engages in psychological conjectures.²⁵ He concludes by saying that Nietzsche's love for Montaigne is based on the "psychic health of the resolutely cheerful Frenchman, who had nothing to hide and nothing to repent, a seductively attractive alternative pole of natural self-expression" (17).²⁶

²⁴ Other similarities are the authors' postulating an interdependence of body and mind, their critique of the natural sciences, their Heraclitean world view, similar use of vocabulary, and the triadic division of their careers. According to Donnellan, it is Montaigne's awareness of the interdependence of good and evil together with his cautiously advanced independence of Church morality which foreshadows Nietzsche's revaluation.

²⁵ Donnellan speculates about Nietzsche's envying Montaigne his well-rounded personality (16).

²⁶ An only slightly more elaborate analysis of French influence on Nietzsche was expounded by Donnellan in *Nietzsche and the French Moralists* (1982) four years before the article. In this book he claims that French influence on Nietzsche's work in general cannot be felt before *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, that the author restricts himself to a merely sweeping portrayal of the French, is critical of them, and only reluc-

In his dissertation *From Montaigne to Nietzsche: Towards a Theory of the Essay* (1982), John William Mowitt defines the essay as a “stubbornly heterogeneous entity which nonetheless is susceptible to aesthetic redemption through the imputation of formal unity” (4). The genre of the essay represents self-reflection in a cultural and primarily literary discourse (222) and constitutes an ideal combination of the critical, of the public sphere, and of the reasoning of private individuals (228). The cornerstones in Mowitt’s tentatively drafted theory are Montaigne and Nietzsche, one establishing the essay as a framework to his confession, the other standing for the disintegration of the essay. Nietzsche thus foreshadows Freud, whose psychoanalytic discourse reflects the final disappearance of the public sphere, thus causing the end of essay writing.

In his chapter on Montaigne, Mowitt approaches the problem of a genealogy of the essay through an analysis of Nietzsche’s journey to Hades (*MA* II 408).²⁷ The model for Nietzsche’s aphorism is “De l’amitié” (I 28). This is a piece of mourning-work, a compensation for the loss of recognition by colleagues, and a dialogue with an interlocutor who is part of the elevated spirituality of the Ancients (Estienne de La Boétie). “De l’amitié” features a strategy of writing: the replacement of La Boétie’s controversial essay with his poems. These, in turn, are also removed in later editions and published separately. Due to social transformations, Montaigne engages in articulating new forms of experience: the strategic discursive loop he employs serves through public confession to protect his personal truth from the public sphere (186). Thus, the real topic of the essay is neither the portrayal of friendship nor the protection of the friend’s political integrity, but “the becoming-portrait-of-the-frame, that is, the frame-work or what we might otherwise describe as the attempt to convert the practice of friendship into cultural discourse” (196).

tantly changes his attitude after the Franco-German war. The chapter “The Aphoristic Form in the French Moralists” includes a short passage on Montaigne, in which Donnellan characterizes the author’s writing as a fascinating combination of a “succession of highly personal associative musings” and personal unity. He contrasts the disorder of the *Essais* with Nietzsche’s conscious and painstaking craftsmanship and emphasizes Montaigne’s style as the main incentive for Nietzsche’s rejection of traditional scholarship, even though its full impact will only be seen in the late Nietzsche (136).

²⁷ In this aphorism Nietzsche gives an account of his meeting with eight favorite authors in a sacrificial journey to the underworld. As a result, he begs his contemporaries’ pardon if sometimes he looks upon them as shadows. He ranks himself among the dead authors, thus being both the wanderer and the shadow of the aphorism immediately following. According to Mowitt, culture for Montaigne and Nietzsche is a return from the dead.

According to Mowitt, the decline of the essay is ultimately brought about by psychoanalysis. This is a dialogical practice in which the public is disclosed as an “invasive presence at the very core of self-reflective experience”. The “classical bourgeois sense of the public sphere as an assembly of critical self-reflection of private individuals” becomes extinguished (288). Before psychoanalysis can gain a foothold, however, it is Nietzsche’s change of genre that helps bring about the essay’s downfall. Mowitt’s thesis is that Nietzsche begins to write aphorisms because the genre lends itself better to responding to the crisis of the public sphere and to the emergence of mass-mediated culture (364). The aphoristic style functions to “cut off” public opinion’s access to the subject by allowing Nietzsche to identify with the process of negating public opinion’s image of the subject as consumer (364).²⁸

In *Nietzsche and the French. A Study on the Influence of Nietzsche's French Reading on his Thought* (1952) William D. Williams portrays

²⁸ On the last six pages of *Montaigne en mouvement* (1982) Jean Starobinski presents Nietzsche’s anthropocosmology. According to Starobinski, it is inherited from Renaissance philosophy as it was influenced by Montaigne. Nietzsche’s eternal return evokes Montaigne’s wheels of history. His emphasis on appearance before reality echoes Montaigne’s problematizing the categories of fact and fiction (“être” and “paraître”). The intellectual balance between the two terms constitutes free play for Montaigne (363), for Nietzsche it is an act of the will. For Nietzsche, the world itself is but the manifestation of a universal will from the very beginning. Such an all-comprehensive worldview is similar to that of many pre-Montaignean philosophers. This view will be replaced in the *Essais* by an economy of the will: presumption, avarice, ambition are all part of ideologies that render immobile. According to “De mesnager sa volonté” (III 10), the will has to be guided by judgment. Will power should be mediated by friendship, loyalty, patriotism, in the same way it is done in the portrait, which is Montaigne’s favorite form of art. Nietzsche’s ideal is the dance, the individual’s movement determined by an impersonal universal energy. Originally an aesthetic position, it can be turned into activism, thus replacing Montaigne’s prudent conservatism. Why is Montaigne not in any danger of succumbing to a totalitarian thinking if it is so frequently found in the later Nietzsche? Apart from the fact that Montaigne is writing against concrete political abuse, his manner of thinking follows the movement of a pendulum: there is a unifying concept of nature, but by no means may its various physical components be reduced to one. A dualism is the smallest entity permitted and is absolutely necessary for the preservation of the individual’s liberty. Thus, unity is both separation and interdependence and discourse carries within it the possibility of its reversal (“accusation permanente”). While the free (Montaignean) consciousness turns against the world and itself at any time (367), in Nietzsche’s thinking, it is the vital return to the world which will be neglected more and more. This creates an eternal recurrence that literally is the exact return of a limited repertoire of experience steering him, according to Starobinski, into the realm of the totalitarian.

Nietzsche as a cultural philosopher who is preoccupied with France.²⁹ the perfection of French culture almost equals that of classical Greece and reflects the problems of decadence and of modernity. In his book, Williams bases Nietzsche's philosophical development on an analysis of his work which is subdivided in three phases,³⁰ examines it with a view to the effect that specific French readings may have had on Nietzsche, and engages in a comparative analysis of Nietzsche's quotations of French texts and their originals.³¹

According to Williams, Nietzsche had four masters who accompanied him throughout his career: Montaigne, La Rochefoucauld, Pascal, and Stendhal. The consistent debate with their thought provided a kind of humor he would fall back on. Nietzsche's major inspiration, however, is Montaigne; and it is his reading of the *Essais* that brings about the break with Wagner,³² especially their characteristic, intelligent, aware, yet unworried skepticism combined with a joy of living. The *Essais* guide Nietzsche to an occupation with human actions and motives, away from the metaphysical to the ethical.

Williams is surprised by Nietzsche's interest in an author so different from him with regard to moderation, tolerance, prudence, and attitude; but he shows how this attraction can be rendered plausible by recalling that Nietzsche "came to the French from the Ancients. Having discovered in them the finest flowering of human strength and sensibility, he is curious from the first to find out whether such a flowering has been possible since, and whether it has been achieved" (17). Montaigne, thus, is a bridge between the "rugged humanism of the Renaissance and the mere refined and delicate sensibility of French classicism" (17).

²⁹ B. Bludau's dissertation *Frankreich im Werk Nietzsches. Geschichte und Kritik der Einflussthese* has been helpful to me for its accounts of Williams, Wilhelm, Andler, and Krökel. Her final suggestion is to look upon France as semiotics in Nietzsche's work.

³⁰ Williams (XI) divides Nietzsche's career into three parts: 1869-76 sees the adaptation of Greek civilisation and an aesthetic, tragic attitude to life; 1876-81 is a period of positivism and critique of idealism, where Nietzsche substitutes the search for truth for the creation of beauty as man's highest activity; from 1881 to 1888 Nietzsche develops concepts of the eternal recurrence, the Superman, the master-slave dialectic, and Dionysos.

³¹ Although she approves of the combination of chronology and systematization, B. Bludau (91) disapproves of Williams' indebtedness to positivism and of his lack of precise evidence (she criticizes his use of the Weimar Archive and of Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche's accounts).

³² Vivarelli (2) and Williams (12) have a similar view of Montaigne's role in Nietzsche's break with Wagner.

Williams maintains that a marked influence of a reading of the *Essais* can already be discovered in the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* and *Über Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinn*.³³ *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* is especially indebted to Montaigne's "unworried skepticism"; Williams points out similarities in the treatment of culture, education, introspection, and subjectivity. *Morgenröte* is a critique of our moral prejudices in the spirit of the *Essais*.³⁴ This book develops the idea of the law of one's own being based on Montaigne's master form ("forme maistresse") (73). This is a struggle for self-awareness, that is, a continual battle between the inner personality and the distractions of flesh and spirit. Although the book is also indebted to La Rochefoucauld, it is Montaigne's positive ideal of the personality that sets the tone. *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* is Montaignean in its doctrines of the sanctity of the personality, the eternal value of our actions, and moral responsibility (85). Nietzsche's glorification of the personality together with Pascalian thought will here lay the foundation for the 'Übermensch'. According to Williams, both Nietzsche and Montaigne refuse to recognize transcendental values; both advise to solve the problems of human nature within the limits set by the individual personality; Montaigne's "branloire perenne" turns up in Nietzsche's eternal recurrence (108).

How Nietzsche goes beyond Montaigne is the most interesting point of Williams's analysis:

Montaigne was content to describe the relative nature of all moral ideas and to draw the conclusion only that each man must work out his own moral salvation. Nietzsche is concerned now to find out what has made the moral systems what they are, and in this he is striking out into country untouched by Montaigne. It is La Rochefoucauld and Pascal and Stendhal

³³ "Was ist also Wahrheit? Ein bewegliches Heer von Metaphern, Metonymien, Anthropomorphismen kurz eine Summe von menschlichen Relationen, die, poetisch und rhetorisch gesteigert, übertragen, geschmückt wurden, und die nach langem Gebrauche einem Volke fest, canonisch und verbindlich dünken: die Wahrheiten sind Illusionen, von denen man vergessen hat, dass sie welche sind, Metaphern, die abgenutzt und sinnlich kraftlos geworden sind, Münzen, die ihr Bild verloren haben und nun als Metall, nicht mehr als Münzen in Betracht kommen" (KSA 1, 880).

³⁴ According to Williams (71) there are direct borrowings from Montaigne on the metaphysical basis of custom: "Was ist das Herkommen? Eine höhere Autorität, welcher man gehorcht, nicht weil sie das uns Nützliche befiehlt, sondern weil sie befiehlt" (*Morgenröte*). "Or, les lois se maintiennent en credit, non par ce qu'elles sont justes, mais par ce qu'elles sont lois. C'est le fondement mystique de leur autorité: elles n'en ont point d'autre" (III 13, 1049).

who are here of value to him, and the researches of contemporary psychologists provide him with the facts on which he builds (116).

Williams is tentatively stating here that Nietzsche develops his idea of genealogy on the basis of a reading of Montaigne. It is Montaigne who transforms him from a writer preoccupied with metaphysics to one preoccupied with ethics.³⁵ This equals an inward swing of the mind, which makes man the measure of all things and self-knowledge the only way to truth. Truth, however, is not the end of a life-long quest, but serves as a spur to action. Nietzsche's philosophy becomes one of doing right, similar to that of Montaigne. Williams concludes with the remark that it is only through a polarity with French thought, especially with Montaigne, that Nietzsche's work reached its unity.³⁶

Julius Wilhelm's description of the Franco-German relationship in Nietzsche's work is heavily indebted to the spirit of the age.³⁷ His essays are, however, interesting in so far as they stress the importance of French culture for Nietzsche's intellectual development while at the same time striving to not have it gain the upper hand over the German literary tradition. In *Nietzsches Bild von Wesen und Entwicklung der französischen Kultur* (1944), Wilhelm gives a short analysis of the four *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, then goes on to discuss Nietzsche's knowledge of French, and emphasizes his perspectival depiction of French literature and culture that is subordinated to the main themes. Then follows a summary of individual epochs of French literature as depicted in Nietzsche's writings. Wilhelm perceives an increased occupation with French literature from 1872, which toward the last years of Nietzsche's career reaches morbid dimensions. The relationship to Montaigne is described as a star-friendship ('Sternenfreundschaft'), where the humanist appears as a teacher of independent spirit, psychological astuteness, sane judgment, prudent self-denial, and at home in noble circles.

³⁵ According to Williams (173), Nietzsche in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* is still obsessed with unconscious, dangerous, and only dimly apprehended forces.

³⁶ "His final position is a happy blend of the metaphysical and the ethical, and the addition of the latter makes his natively metaphysical thinking all the richer and gives it a more forceful, personal, and vital note which it might otherwise have lacked" (Williams, 174).

³⁷ One example: "Als Nietzsche Bonner und Leipziger Student war, bildeten für ihn die griechische Antike, die Schopenhauerische Philosophie und die Wagnersche Musik das Dreigestirn, das ihm den Weg in die deutsche Zukunft erhellen sollte" (Wilhelm, 104).

Wilhelm's earlier publication *Friedrich Nietzsche und der französische Geist* (1939) describes the role of French moralists and psychologists in Nietzsche's intellectual development as follows: they help him to discern matters of psychological similarities more clearly and correctly through their method of psychological observation and their unveiling and simplifying explanation of results (14). They provide an incentive to question the traditional notions of truth, morality, and values. They help Nietzsche to define ethical values as the products of dissimulation covering the one basic human drive: the will to rule ("l'esprit de dominer").

According to Wilhelm, it is from 1881 on that Nietzsche uses his French readings as a basis for his work. Two traits are especially remarkable: his use of morality and psychology and the development of an idea of nobility (attitude, spiritual health, societal excellence, high and noble form). He admits, however, that Nietzsche does admire the Troubadours, French Middle Ages, and Renaissance throughout his career. According to him, France represents the "idéale Germany" in Nietzsche's work.³⁸

In 1936 Benjamin Fondane published a collection of essays entitled *La conscience malheureuse*.³⁹ Aesthetically, Fondane is interested in that specific metaphysical moment before the unknown perceived by the poet becomes an intellectual fact, apprehended by reason.⁴⁰ Rational evidence

³⁸ Wilhelm criticizes C. Andler's 'overestimation' of French influence on Nietzsche (17), maintains that Nietzsche's French readings were not vital in promoting his intellectual development (39), and states that Andler overemphasizes Nietzsche's role as a promoter of French culture (40). In *Europas Selbstbesinnung durch Nietzsche. Ihre Vorbereitung bei den Französischen Moralisten*, F. Krökel in a similar way downplays French influence on Nietzsche's intellectual development. In a collection of quotations and parallels systematized according to topics, he maintains that Nietzsche's thought did not take a different turn after being exposed to French culture and that it is hardly worth tracing the influence of individual authors (6). Nietzsche would have been the same philosopher without the help of French ideas (60). All the French moralists did was to help him define the soul of the European and thus to diagnose the psyche of an entire continent (28, 63, 112). The French, according to Krökel, had an eye-opening effect on Nietzsche by presenting him with an atmosphere of clarity and by helping him to "become what he is" (5, 10). Krökel's book is already written in the nationalistic spirit that was intensified three years later by A. Baeumler and that is also found in Wilhelm's analyses.

³⁹ Barbu Fundoianu (1898-1944), French writer of Roumanian Jewish origin. He lived in Paris since 1923, where he worked for an insurance company and participated in Paris intellectual life. He published *Confession d'un candelabre* (1928), *Rimbaud le voyou* (1933), *Ulysse* (1933), *La conscience malheureuse* (1936), *Titanic* (1937), *Faux traité d'esthétique* (1938), *Le Mal des fantômes* (1944), *Au temps du poème* (1944). He was killed in Birkenau in 1944.

⁴⁰ *Rimbaud le voyou*.

induces philosophers to disregard metaphysical reality, either because it is incomprehensible by their concepts, or because it would lead to a negative existential experience. Some try to remedy this by applying philosophical systems to life (Hegel, Marx), some by building systems that account for the problem (Kierkegaard, Bergson, Husserl, Heidegger).

Politically, Fondane's book is an urgent plea for action. His introduction is written in view of political events.⁴¹ It announces the end of an epoch, proclaims a crisis, and calls up the legitimate will of man to try and forge with his own means and at the risk of suffocating a desperate rescue operation (IX). One of these saving means is to use philosophy as a politically active force.⁴² Fondane claims the right to an unhappy consciousness ("conscience malheureuse"), which is the expression of an unhappy social condition.⁴³ He proposes a dialectic of philosophy and life: thought that is enriching, changing, becoming existence; freedom through a life beyond knowledge.

His very short chapter on Nietzsche gives an account of the philosopher's atheism: despite his writing *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* Nietzsche is not interested in the human. For as an enterprise man has failed from its very beginning. It is only at the end of the nineteenth century, however, that man is becoming conscious of this. Nietzsche's anti-humanism is therefore fundamentally the result of a disappointed search for God in man. His raging against human frailty serves to pave the way for the new man who will have rediscovered his original nature. After all, as Fondane sees it, Nietzsche does have some confidence in man on the grounds of the one powerful act he committed - the killing of God. Since that moment, man has been living in a paradoxical state: man had killed God and nevertheless he continued to live as if despite the death of God not everything was permitted (63). The disproportionate act of autonomy turns out to be gratuitous. Instead of slipping into anarchy, man remains unconscious of the sacrifice. Nietzsche concludes that the human being

⁴¹ France in the thirties was sliding into fascism. The fascist riots in February 1934 on the Place de la Concorde were only one of many rightwing incidences that occurred during the period. As a result the communist party together with the socialists founded the "front populaire" in 1936. The intellectuals' reactions to the fascist trend can be seen in Drieu la Rochelle, Artaud, Bergson, and Malraux among others.

⁴² "[L]a philosophie n'est pas quelque chose comme un vérificateur des poids et des mesures - ou comme elle le dit: des évidences - mais *l'acte même par lequel l'existant pose sa propre existence, l'acte même du vivant, cherchant en lui et hors de lui, avec ou contre les évidences, les possibilités même du vivre*" (Fondane, X).

⁴³ Hegel's unhappy consciousness arises from the moral person's insight in not being able to prevent the Good from being contaminated by history.

does not benefit from cognition, does not gain experience. Unlike Adam, who acknowledges his defeat, modern man eats eternally anew from the forbidden tree. According to Fondane, the supreme cruelty of this atheism is its refusal to allow for the freedom to reject knowledge. Once God has been sacrificed, Nietzsche cannot return to a state of innocence. It is this extreme intellectual honesty that finally drives him into madness.

The chapter immediately following is an analysis of André Gide's reading of Montaigne (and Pascal) via a Nietzschean detour. Gide regards Nietzsche as the first writer to realize that modern consciousness is caught between these authors' attitude toward Christianity. Gide describes both their attitudes as intellectual integrity ("probité d'esprit"), a sort of rationalism, that in the case of Montaigne is God internalized, or faith to the point where it assumes the appearance of freedom.⁴⁴ In the case of Pascal it is complete sacrifice of the intellect and of God to a point beyond which Montaigne did not dare to go.⁴⁵ Faced with Pascal and Montaigne, Nietzsche, according to Fondane, chooses the former. At the same time, it is Pascal who shows Gide how to read Montaigne before understanding Nietzsche.⁴⁶ Montaigne's precautionary temperance can be opposed to Nietzsche's moral honesty, his lack of courage to Nietzsche's total risk. Fondane's essay is the account of a conversion that seems to be imperceptible in Gide's novels. But it is precisely Gide's readiness to explore different ideas ('disponibilité'), the will to a detour as a Montaignean heirloom (92), that furthers his personal and artistic development.

According to Charles Andler's *Les précurseurs de Nietzsche* (1920), Plato is the prominent figure in Nietzsche's intellectual family tree.⁴⁷ An-

⁴⁴ "Montaigne est, dans le monde moderne, un des premiers hommes qui *savent*, qui ont tourné le dogmatisme religieux au profit de la Raison. Il sait tout, même (et surtout) ce dont il doute. Il ne hait rien tant que l'incertitude" (Fondane, 75).

⁴⁵ "Montaigne entrevoit bien que l'on puisse aller plus loin qu'il n'a été lui-même sur sa propre route, mais il craint les régions désertiques, et celles où l'air est trop raréfié. *Quand je suis allé le plus avant que je puis, si ne me suis-je aucunement satisfait: je voy encore du pays au delà, mais d'une veüe trouble & en nuage, que je ne puis desmeler.* Il a horreur de perdre pied,..." (Gide, 47).

⁴⁶ "Si donc la "probité d'esprit" de Gide était intervenue à temps, si elle lui avait interdit de situer Montaigne sur la route même de Nietzsche, la question serait bien différente; mais alors qu'allait chercher Gide dans Montaigne - car je laisse de côté la séduction de l'écrivain et les charmes de l'homme? Et pourquoi n'est-il pas allé directement à Nietzsche? Si Montaigne n'est pas toujours un mauvais maître - il ne l'était pas pour Pascal, qui a montré *comme* il fallait s'en servir - en s'y opposant - il n'est pas moins vrai que c'est un mauvais maître pour Gide" (Fondane, 80).

⁴⁷ Greek culture exercises a permanent influence on Nietzsche (Bludau, 53).

other important figure is Emerson.⁴⁸ In addition, Andler sees phases of attraction, such as the “French and Socratic phase” from 1876 to 1882, during which one of the short and intensive influences is that of Montaigne.⁴⁹ Nietzsche is mainly attracted to Montaigne’s smiling intelligence. Andler traces some of the direct quotes, which are developed into affinities by Nietzsche: these are a realistic view of Greek civilisation, a use of skepticism for recollection and for the development of an affirmative world view, a definition of reason as disciplined thought, an emphasis on the dignity of freethinking, relativism, a view of the personality as double, the importance of the gregarious spirit for maintaining the deceptive entity of man, a use of Socratism and Heraclitism, and a view of pedagogy. Andler concludes, however, that Nietzsche’s French phase does not leave a palpable trace of Montaigne (114). Instead, Nietzsche internalized Montaigne by meditating on Pascal.⁵⁰

The earliest account of the relationship between Nietzsche and Montaigne can be found in Charles Sarolea’s *German Problems and Personalities* (1917).⁵¹ Sarolea’s analyses lay bare the intellectual influences at the root of German politics at the beginning of the twentieth century. His portraits of Nietzsche (and Montaigne) are part of a chapter entitled “The German War Triumvirate” also featuring Treitschke and Bern-

⁴⁸ He is one of the permanent influences that are, however, difficult to recognize (Bludau, 53).

⁴⁹ Bludau, 53.

⁵⁰ “Nietzsche n’a pas lutté contre l’influence de Montaigne. Il s’est laissé aller à la séduction de son naturel et de son intelligence. C’est avec violence au contraire qu’il s’est débattu contre Pascal” (C. Andler, 116). Andler was criticized by Victor Bouillier in *La renommée de Montaigne en Allemagne* (1921) for seeing too pronounced affinities and points of contact between the two authors, especially with regard to Nietzsche’s theory of pedagogy, which, according to Andler, took up every detail proposed by Montaigne. Bouillier however sees Nietzsche’s aim as producing the ‘Übermensch’ who has nothing in common with Montaigne’s good nobleman. Although Bouillier admits that Nietzsche was one of Montaigne’s most fervent admirers and remained faithful to his ideal throughout the successive evolutions of his thought, he warns of Nietzsche’s ever changing preferences and of his oblique interpretations of canonical authors. He concludes that Nietzsche would not have been different or lesser if he had not known the *Essais*. Montaigne was simply a friend for him, who diverts, consoles, and stimulates the spirit.

⁵¹ Also published in C. Sarolea’s *The French Renaissance*, 49-58. Charles Sarolea (1870-1953) was a Belgian diplomat and Consul in Edinburgh, a friend of King Albert’s, a scholar and head of the French and Romance department at Edinburgh University.

hardi.⁵² Together the three symbolize the German national character abroad and explain Germany's willingness to engage in war. Sarolea's Nietzsche portrayal is an attempt at understanding anew and making known an important modern thinker and to show how he has been misread by his compatriots.⁵³ He shows that Nietzsche is both an iconoclast and a heroworshiper, a revolutionary and a constructive thinker, a systematic pagan and an uncompromising aristocrat. The reasons for his popularity are the style and the form of his work, his adaptability to the times despite his intention to fight against them, his moral personality, which is a combination of noble courage, splendid integrity, love of truth, and hatred of cant.

It is Montaigne who is Nietzsche's spiritual father.⁵⁴ Although the two authors seem to be so very much opposed, Sarolea suspects an unconventional Montaigne underneath masks of skepticism, conservatism, irony, moderation, affectation of humility, frivolity, pedantry, and innocent candor (96):

⁵² Heinrich v. Treitschke (1834-1896): historian and political analyst fighting socialism, Jewish culture (he causes the *Berliner Antisemitismusstreit*), and advocating conservatism, Prussian militarism, colonialism, and the authoritarian state. His *Deutsche Geschichte im 19. Jahrhundert* appeared in 1879.

Friedrich v. Bernhardt (1849-1930): Prussian general and military writer; his *Deutschland und der nächste Krieg* (1912) declares a European war inevitable and leaves it up to Germany to choose between becoming a world power or being annihilated.

⁵³ "He is a convincing illustration of Fichte's dictum, that any great system of philosophy is the outcome, not of the intellect, but of a man's character. Nietzsche is not a metaphysician like Hegel, whom he abhorred. He is not a 'logic-grinder', like Mill, whom he despised. He is a moralist, like the French, whom he loved. He was steeped in Montaigne, to whom he has paid a glowing tribute in 'Schopenhauer as Educationalist'" (Sarolea, 88).

⁵⁴ To my knowledge, C. Sarolea is the first writer to realize the kinship between the two authors. There are only two short accounts to be found earlier on. In one of Burckhardt's letters to Nietzsche (4.4.1879) we find the following remark on *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*: "Wie käme es auch La Rochefoucauld, Labruyère und Vauvenargues vor, wenn sie im Hades Ihr Buch zu lesen erhielten? und was würde der alte Montaigne sagen? Einstweilen weiss ich eine Anzahl von Sprüchen, um welche zum Beispiel Laroche foucauld Sie ernstlich beneiden würde" (Bludau, 21). In *Friedrich Nietzsche und die Kulturprobleme unserer Zeit* (1900), A. Kalthoff sees Montaigne as a main precursor of Nietzsche: "Montaigne ist der kleine Nietzsche, aber liebenswürdiger, harmloser, deshalb erscheinen auch bei ihm die Gedanken, die Nietzsche ins Grandiose überspannt und leidenschaftlich übertreibt, in ihrer subjektiven Berechtigung durchsichtiger. Ja, manche der ungeheuerlichsten, abstossendsten Behauptungen Nietzsches lernen wir erst in ihrem wirklichen Sinn begreifen, wenn wir dieselben durch Montaigne erklären" (29).

The real and esoteric Montaigne is, like Nietzsche, a herald of revolt, one of the most revolutionary thinkers of all times. And the Gascon philosopher who philosophizes with a smile is far more dangerous than the Teuton who philosophizes with a hammer. The corrosive acid of his irony is more destructive than the violence of the other (98).⁵⁵

Charles Sarolea is one of the readers to understand that in following just one single trait of Nietzsche's writing one must necessarily arrive at an unsatisfactory interpretation. He demonstrates how to read Nietzsche by juxtaposing him to one of his precursors. By virtue of this strategic move he can unmask him, on the one hand, as a mere inelegant remake of the Montaignean ironist, thus establishing his innocence with a view to his readers' stupidity and their use of his texts in the course of history. On the other hand, he gives him a humanistic genealogy, thus canonizing him for the future.

Conclusion

Recent analyses of the relationship between Nietzsche and Montaigne engage in a dialogical comparison of the two authors (Panichi); they also describe Montaigne's influence on the formation of Nietzsche's free spirit who leads his life according to his personal insight (Vivarelli), on the formation of the 'Übermensch' who is Montaigne multiplied (Molner), and on the development of Nietzsche's style through a modernist reading of the *Essais* (Marchi). The *Essais* also serve Nietzsche as a lesson in successful self-portrayal (Donnellan), as a model for a discourse adapted to social conditions (Mowitt), and for the depiction of the ideal gentleman (Wilhelm). Montaigne helps Nietzsche to find his own voice as a philosopher (Williams), and to develop a balanced personality by learning to appreciate serene skepticism (Andler). Montaigne is Nietzsche's unattainable and unequalled inspiration (Sarolea).

That Nietzsche is far more bourgeois than he would ever have liked to acknowledge is also the opinion of Thomas Mann, who, after the Second World War, sees himself again faced with the task of saving Nietzsche for the humanistic cause. *Nietzsches Philosophie im Lichte unserer Er-*

⁵⁵ For the sake of precision I would like to point out that C. Sarolea here uses only the more obvious of the possible interpretations of the subtitle to Nietzsche's *Götzendämmerung, oder wie man mit dem Hammer philosophiert*, the other one referring to the inner ear and to the capacity to listen and to read.

fahrung (1948) is an attempt at proving that Nietzsche's work cannot be equated with Hitler's doctrines. It ends with an instruction of how to read Nietzsche: by being wary of persuasive rhetoric, by recognizing feints, by taking seriously his remarks on how to interpret him.

It is striking to see that the studies presented in the preceding pages try, for the most part, to analyze Montaigne's influence on Nietzsche and focus on a discussion of skepticism and "joie de vivre". Only Sarolea's remarks differ from them in that they uncover the revolutionary Montaigne from underneath Nietzschean masks through a comparative reading that refers to the rhetorical strategies which both writers have in common. The following chapters will therefore use the rhetorical dimension of Nietzsche's text in order to depict strategies of writing in Montaigne's *Essais*. My approach is founded on rhetoric, in that Nietzsche's texts in each chapter are adapted to serve the particular demands of those Montaignean essays that I analyze. Thus, I hope to develop a continuous argument that spans the genre of the personal essay, physiological style, teaching through metaphor, reasonable dissimulation, adiphora, and contingency.

CHAPTER ONE

AN ART OF SYNTHESIS IN MONTAIGNE'S ESSAY

So manchen Klugen fand ich: Der verschleierte sein Antlitz und trübte sein Wasser, dass niemand ihm hindurch und hinunter sehe. / Aber zu ihm gerade kamen die klügeren Misstrauer und Nussknacker: ihm gerade fischte man seinen verborgensten Fisch heraus! / Sondern die Hellen, die Wackern, die Durchsichtigen, - das sind mir die klügsten Schweiger: denen so t i e f ihr Grund ist, dass auch das hellste Wasser ihn nicht - verrät (Also sprach Zarathustra, *KSA* 4, 220).

Many I found who were clever: they veiled their faces and muddied their waters that nobody might see through them, deep down. But precisely to them came the cleverer mistrusters and nutcrackers: precisely their most hidden fish were fished out. It is the bright, the bold, the transparent who are cleverest among those who are silent: their ground is down so deep that even the brightest water does not betray it.

Transparency seems to be one characteristic trait of the personal essay, which in this chapter is exemplified by Montaigne's "De l'art de conferer" (III 8). My analysis will take the shape of a commentary that continuously rewrites Montaigne's text by drawing from both the classical and humanistic sources that make this essay a written conversation. In order to illustrate the novelty of Montaigne's technique, I will use the Nietzschean concepts of immoralism and aphoristic writing; thus, I hope to describe the particular nature of Montaigne's art of synthesis.

In the eighth essay of book three of his *Essais*, the author discusses the art of conversation. Having considered two ways of life in the preceding essay - either that of a head of state and surrounded by flatterers, or that of a figure independent of thought but in a subordinate position - and uncovering his readers' shortcomings by disclosing his own in the following essay "De la vanité", the author in "De l'art de conferer" lays down the rules for a good conversation. It must be entertaining, that is, it must play with contradiction, intuition, and association. It must also convey and illustrate attitudes or modes of thinking. Apart from these requirements, which are only two of the many that will be analyzed in this chapter, it should also be noted right away - as one of the characteristics of the *Es-*

sais - that on a metatextual level Montaigne in “De l’art de conferer” verifies to what degree the concept of conversation can fulfill the multiple functions that are assigned to his metaphysical deck of cards, that is, the *Essais* themselves.¹

Most critics regard “De l’art de conferer” as an essay that reveals much about Montaigne himself. Usually this is attributed to the author’s displaying subjectivism to a degree that surpasses the extent of the self-revelations in his other essays. However, some essays of the third book, in particular the essays on physiognomy and on experience, are much more autobiographical - in the sense that they fully display the author’s self as example - than the essay III 8. Therefore, this statement must be taken with a grain of salt, as must so much of the existing Montaigne criticism.² The singularity of this particular essay does not derive from its suppos-

¹ In the introductory part to the essay “De l’expérience” (III 13) Montaigne mentions Perrozet the card-manufacturer, who despite his skill is incapable of making two cards look alike to such a degree that an experienced player might not distinguish them by way of tiny faults. Montaigne’s moral and philosophical concepts, his collection of ‘virtues’ and ‘vices’, can be regarded as playing cards that change their value according to how they are combined.

² Recent articles on the essay “De l’art de conférer” (III 8) are the following:

J. Brody (“Of the Art of Discussion: A Philological Reading”) suggests an alternative to content-centered and ideological readings. Brody underlines the “unsuspected coherency” of the essay, a verbal continuum based on the notion of stimulus (overlapping semantic fields of sport, contest, single combat). “What is slowly emerging from this philological reading of the essay are the lineaments of a typology or a sociology of communication, in which eloquence and persuasiveness are a function not of what one knows, nor even of what one says or does, but, rather, of what one is” (162).

B. Boudou (“L’accomplissement des *Essais* dans ‘De l’Art de conferer’”) claims that the essay develops a new hermeneutics on the basis of an intellectual exchange between author and reader, whose personae become interchangeable in the process of reading the text. The pattern of this exchange is judicial condemnation, description of an observable event, and aesthetical appreciation on the basis of two or more counter-examples.

A. Delagrangé (“De l’art de conférer (III 8) ou la station de Junon”) opts for the essay as a mnemonic place for the goddess Juno. She proves her thesis with a reference to the etymology of *conferre*, “cum fero”, and *Feronia*, one of the attributes of the goddess.

J. Bemelmans and W. J. A. Bots (“‘De l’art de conférer’ ou l’apprentissage de la modestie dans la recherche de la méthode”) underline the neutralizing effect of the pairs of opposites in the essay, that serve to illustrate the intellectual faculties of the human being while teaching a lesson in modesty with its emphasis on the *juste milieu*.

C. Bauschatz has demonstrated Montaigne’s belief in the equal involvement of writer and reader in the reading process (“Montaigne’s Conception of Reading in the Context of Renaissance Poetics and Modern Criticism”). Bauschatz analyzes important metaphors, such as the tennis game, the book as a walk, the *Essais* as a book of nature, reading as transformation through introspection (an innovative trait), and the notion of consubstantiality which entails a definition of reading as (Barthesian) experience.

edly extraordinary likeness as a self-portrait. Such an argument would, if at all, apply to "De la vanité", where the author uses the personal pronoun 'moy' more often than in any other essay and thus seems to take the constancy between the book and the self to its extremes. "De l'art de conferer" plays a crucial role in Montaigne's work because he here introduces a method of self-knowledge, self-portraiture, self-characterization, and self-interpretation that is entirely his own and one that will allow the attentive reader to discern how the author seeks to tide over the political and religious crisis in France while striving to keep his integrity.

"De l'art de conferer" (Essais III 8)

The law condemns the guilty party in order to scare off potential wrongdoers. Montaigne intends to publish his moral failings in order to teach his reader to fear and avoid them. He proceeds, as he explains, in an uncouth manner, because it is usually the good example that instructs, whereas he has educated and formed himself by analyzing, classifying and then avoiding the bad example. After this introductory syllogism Montaigne defines his conception of a conversation: "Le plus fructueux et naturel exercice de nostre esprit, c'est à mon gré la conférence" (900 b) ("To my taste the most fruitful and most natural exercise of our minds is conversation" [1045]). It is an occupation that he likes even better than the study of books, because it tests and trains what he names "body and soul" much more efficiently.³

In order to have an interesting conversation, Montaigne's argument continues, one needs competent adversaries. These are only discovered by conversing with intelligent people. The author then defines his own way of beginning a conversation, that is, without prejudice, with a free and unencumbered spirit, and ready to listen to what the interlocutor has to say. Thus he can gain and develop the faculty of judgment that plays a crucial role in the search for truth. It is truth that Montaigne appreciates above all, to the point even of inviting the reader to criticize his own work, provided this criticism takes on the required form.⁴

For Montaigne, order is synonymous with the rejection of pedantic style, which places rhetoric above content. He himself prefers to emulate

³ The combination of "corps et âme" is taken over from Plato's *Phaidros* (246, 253, 254), but is also influenced by the scanty yet fashionable physiological knowledge of the epoch (see chapter 2).

⁴ "Ce n'est pas tant la force et la subtilité que je demande, comme l'ordre" (903 c).

the arguments of shepherds and shop-assistants or the disputes at inns and taverns. It is this natural conversation that he opposes to the artifice of scholastic discourse. The ideal lack of artifice is illustrated in the image of the chase or hunt, where the hunters follow their path in apparent disorder and without design, yet never lose sight of their prey. In the context of the essay, the prey represents a notion of truth. Since the search for truth is the ultimate end of human existence,⁵ the chase is a metaphor for life itself. In order to reinforce this idea, Montaigne will later add: “Le monde n’est qu’une escole d’inquisition” (906 c) (“This world is but a school of inquiry” [1051]). Conversation, thus, does not only represent verbal alteration, but also a manner of living, of always being in pursuit without ever attaining a state of perfection. Any knowledge of truth, whatever this concept may contain, is beyond us, as Montaigne expresses in “Des coches”:

Nous n’allons point, nous rodons plustost, et tournoions ça et là. Nous nous promenons sur nos pas. Je crains que nostre cognoissance soit foible en tous sens, nous ne voyons ny gueres loin, ny guere arriere; elle embrasse peu et vit peu, courte et en estandue de temps et en estandue de matiere: (III 6, 885 b).

We cannot be said to progress but rather to wander about this way and that. We follow our own footsteps. I am afraid that our knowledge is in every sense weak; we cannot see very far ahead nor very far behind; it grasps little, lives little, skimmed in terms of both time and matter (1027).

That is why he does not so much look for content in his favorite authors, but for their method of presentation.⁶ Skill, care, caution, and competence in a literary performance are more important for him than faultlessness and exactitude.

After some reflections on his own intolerance of inept or stupid people, Montaigne continues with a passage on the senses. The senses are our first and most important judges and therefore a positive faculty. Sense experience, however, must be interpreted and put to the test. Since most men never see beyond the face, the clothes, and the wealth of their interlocutors, which is natural and inevitable for the human being who, by his very

⁵ “Car nous sommes nais à quester la verité” (906 b).

⁶ “Et tous les jours m’amuse à lire en des autheurs, sans soin de leur science, y cherchant leur façon, non leur subject. Tout ainsi que je poursuy la communication de quelque esprit fameux, non pour qu’il m’enseigne, mais pour que je le cognoisse” (III 8, 906 c).

existence is drawn toward the concrete, sense experience can become negative. If it remains a man's only source of knowledge, it causes restricted vision and indiscriminate judgment. What Montaigne is accordingly looking for is the union of sense and experience. It is here expressed in the formula of "body and soul" and can only succeed in a strong and vigorous nature. The faculty of the will, which facilitates this fusion, is especially important for kings, who, once they have been placed above the people, be it by the sheer luck of their birth or by their subjects' lack of judgment, are in their exalted position suddenly beyond the reach of public critique. For them, the will must maintain the balance between body and soul and thus assumes a controlling function.

In short, not everything an interlocutor says should be accepted at face value. Instead, his every word should be weighed and tested for the character that will reveal itself in the discourse (914 b). What is more, the content of books should be assessed in a similar manner (915 c), including the content of the *Essais*. Readers as well as interlocutors have to refrain from and distrust indiscriminate judgment ("jugement universel") and any written or spoken commonplace ("opinion en général"). In order to put these considerations into practice, Montaigne proposes to use a friendly tone in all verbal interaction. He then shows his own manner of assessing his interlocutor or opponent: he asks questions in order to find out whether the other is capable of evaluating objectively himself and his work as well as Montaigne and Montaigne's work.

The chapter ends with a performative gesture, an analysis of Tacitus. In following the precepts he has been unfolding so far, Montaigne shows how he himself evaluates a writer and his work. First, he describes Tacitus' method⁷ that presents individual lives rather than general history. This method is useful and instructive because private lives obey universal laws that are comprehensible to all people at all times. Yet does not entirely agree with Tacitus' judgment of others, of Pompeius, for example, nor does he accept Tacitus' style, which he imitates in order to illustrate its faults (919 b); nor does he like his excessive display of modesty, that to him seems artificial and bordering onto a lack of personal judgment. Montaigne himself talks openly about his failings as well as his merits, though always with detachment.⁸ As a conclusion to the essay, he can now evaluate the character of Tacitus, an upright and courageous man, but one

⁷ "[Q]ui mesle à un registre public tant de consideration des mœurs et inclinations particulieres" (919 b).

⁸ "J'ose non seulement parler de moy, mais parler seulement de moy; je fourvoye quand j'escry d'autre chose et me desrobe à mon subject" (921 c).

not prudent enough when it comes to examining and reviewing his own writings, and consequently his character. This flaw may be due to his being a historian. Montaigne, who knows his subject (the self) really well, nevertheless does not cease to analyze it.⁹

In giving advice on how to have a good conversation, the practises this art himself. He begins freely and easily with an example that has no relation to the subject, but serves to explain the utility of the advice that will follow. He becomes belligerent and employs malign irony when talking about stupid people, but excuses himself at the same time for his intolerance by using Plato as an example with a similar fault (903 c). A little further, he even tries not to become too critical of an illness (stupidity) that cannot be healed and that, after all, may be merely a different way of seeing the world. He is attentive not to lose sight of his subject matter.¹⁰ He does not let himself be impressed by rank, even if he admits that when one criticizes kings one must be cautious.¹¹

All these qualities, which are regarded as indispensable by Montaigne for a good conversation, are qualities necessary for a beautiful soul and a beautiful life. In the course of the essay, he enumerates them while showing that he possesses them and distrusts them at the same time. He teaches his reader to develop his own judgment, so that at the end of the chapter, as a necessary consequence, the latter would feel called upon to evaluate Montaigne. One knows that Montaigne finds pleasure in being judged, and, as the chapter advances, he lets himself be discovered by the reader, who, in his turn, is invited to analyze himself. This is a much more subtle invitation than the one proffered in the essay "De la vanité", where the author expressly encourages the reader to engage in self-criticism, to take a look at himself in the mirror of Montaigne's text.¹² However, this task requires the faculty of self-criticism, which many people do not possess to a sufficient degree. That is why we are in need of a kindred spirit ("âme pareille"), that helps us first to discover and then to avoid our flaws. This kindred soul is Montaigne himself, who, although he constantly takes his own person as an example, only three times in his three volumes of essays

⁹ "Je me presente debout et couché, le devant et le derriere, à droite et à gauche, et en tous mes naturels plis" (158 c).

¹⁰ "Mais suyons" (905 b); "Je dis plus," (912 b); "Or, j'estois sur ce point" (913 b).

¹¹ "Il nous faut prendre garde combien c'est de parler à son heure" (914 b).

¹² "Si les autres se regardoient attentivement, comme je fay, ils se trouveroient, comme je fay, pleins d'inanité et de fadaise" (III 9, 979 b); the Delphic oracle (III 9, 979 b).

uses his name¹³ and who, whenever he uses the first person as an example in “De l’art de conferer”, describes his private and unknown side, that is, his imperfections.¹⁴

Montaigne’s method as it is performed in “De l’art de conferer” intends to show that learning how to converse signifies learning how to live. For him, this means living a life regardless of its outcome (wealth, social rank); instead, he teaches the will and persistence to always fight and to find yet another elegant turn that permits the hunting game to continue. A glance at the essay “De la phisionomie” (III 12) would remind the reader not to forget that sometimes it is Montaigne himself who is in the position of the hunted prey. With his purpose in mind, he presents himself tirelessly with all his flaws to his readers’ eyes: with the pride in his extensive knowledge, in his intelligence, and in his judgment. At the same time, he attempts to become conscious of this pride and to moderate it. And if the reader had only been paying attention, he would feel obliged to adopt this attitude.

¹³ One example is found in the essay “Du repentir”, where the author presents his project: “Les auteurs se communiquent au peuple par quelque marque particuliere et estrangere; moy, le premier, par mon estre universel, comme Michel de Montaigne, non comme grammairien, ou poëte, ou jurisconsulte” (III 2, 782 c). The second example occurs in “De la vanité”, where he says “Nous empeschons noz pensées du general et des causes et conduittes universelles, qui se conduisent très bien sans nous, et laissons en arriere nostre faict et Michel” (III 9, 929 c). The third example is found in “De mesnager sa volonté”: “Le Maire et Montaigne ont tousjours esté deux, d’une separation bien claire” (III 10, 989 b).

¹⁴ “[M]a complexion” signifies his temperament that learns better “par fuite que par suite” (899); “L’horreur de la cruauté me rejette plus avant en la clemence qu’aucun patron de clemence ne me sçauroit attirer. Un bon escuyer ne redresse pas tant mon assiete, comme faict un procureur ou un Venitien à cheval; et une mauvaise façon de langage reforme mieux la mienne que ne faict la bonne. Tous les jours la sotte contenance d’un autre m’advertit et m’advise. Ce qui poind, touche et esveille mieux que ce qui plaist” (900); “J’ayme à contester et à discourir, mais c’est avec peu d’hommes et pour moy” (901); “Quand on me contrarie, on esveille mon attention, non pas ma cholere; je m’avance vers celui qui me contredit, qui m’instruit. La cause de la verité devoit estre la cause commune à l’un et à l’autre” (902); “Je festoye et caresse la verité en quelque main que je la trouve, et m’y rends alaigrement, et luy tends mes armes vaincues, de loing que je la vois approcher” (902); “Je hay toute sorte de tyrannie, et la parliere, et l’effectuelle” (910); “Toute inclination et soumission leur [aux rois] est deue, sauf celle de l’entendement. Ma raison n’est pas duite à se courber et flechir, ce sont mes genoux” (913); “J’ose non seulement parler de moy, mais parler seulement de moy; je fourvoye quand j’escry d’autre chose et me desrobe à mon subject” (921); “Moy qui suis Roy de la matiere que je traicte, et qui n’en dois conte à personne, ne m’en crois pourtant pas du tout; je hasarde souvent des boutades de mon esprit, desquelles je me deffie” (922).

Montaigne's Personal Encyclopaedia

Montaigne is a moralist. The moralist depicts man. He describes customs of any kind, ways and forms of life, the spirit of an age, and characters. He presents detailed empirical knowledge of different individuals, as well as of entire peoples, on the basis of which he then develops his moral science, that is, the definition of the human being in general. For Montaigne, man is fickle.¹⁵ Consequently, the literary form in which this object is set down must be an open form. Since Montaigne is considered to be the inventor of the essay, in the following pages I will look first at the genre's origin by presenting one particular item of Montaigne's private encyclopaedia¹⁶ and then ask what kind of (literary) performance the essay permits Montaigne to attempt in "De l'art de conferer".

The noun 'essai' describes an operation meant to test a thing or a being for its quality. It is derived from the Latin 'exagium', which signifies the action of weighing or a weight.¹⁷ In Montaigne's texts the term is usually applied to actions or attitudes that are analyzed for their moral qualities, because for Montaigne himself, writing essays means testing or assaying

¹⁵ "[U]n subject merueilleusement vain, divers et ondoyant" (I 1, 13 a).

¹⁶ Like the linguists and the grammarians of his time, such as Estienne Dolet, Henri Estienne, Louis Meigret, and Pierre de La Ramée, Montaigne engages in encyclopaedic activity. The notion of the encyclopaedia emerges from the Palace Academies. One representative of the encyclopaedic movement is Pontus de Tyard with his complete work: *Solitaire premier*, *Solitaire second* (exposition of poetic enthusiasm and the Muses, exposition of Music), *Premier curieux*, *Second curieux* (philosophical knowledge, religion), *Discours du temps*, *de l'an et de ses parties*, and *Mantice, ou discours de la verité de Divination par Astrologie*. Antoine de Baïf's academy advertises the encyclopaedic virtue of music as including all the arts and sciences and by way of a revival of antique rhythms intends to bring about moral reformation (F. Yates, *The French Academies of the Sixteenth Century*, pp. 77). Another source for the concept of the encyclopaedia is Erasmus and a discourse pronounced by Pierre de La Ramée at the University of Paris in 1550 (F. Simone, "La critique littéraire au XVIe siècle"). The latter develops a new method of teaching that combines science with rhetoric and dialectics. Montaigne's pursuit of a private or personal encyclopaedia, as I see it, would actually defy the purpose of the notion that aims at universal erudition or would place the author firmly on the humanistic side in the critical disputes of his age.

¹⁷ I have used *Le Grand Larousse de la Langue Française*, *Le Robert's Dictionnaire Historique*, and Huguet's *Dictionnaire de la langue française du XVIe siècle*. See also E. Telle's article "A propos du mot 'Essai' chez Montaigne", that ends with a list of occurrences of the word 'essay' in Montaigne's *Essais*.

his natural gifts.¹⁸ He also uses the noun in the sense of testing his entire life (“Je remets à la mort l’essay du fruit de mes études” [I 19, 79 a]; “The assay of the fruits of my studies is postponed unto death” [87]), that is, he will give an account of it on his last day. A frequent sixteenth-century use of the word is “testing a man’s patience”, which is found in II 5, 348 a (“plustost un essayt de patience que de vérité”; “an assay not of the truth but of a man’s endurance” [414]); but Montaigne transfers the locution to a political context where it comes to mean testing a tortured victim’s endurance. “Pour qui en voudra goustier, j’en ay faict l’essay, son eschançon” (III 13, 1057 b) (“Should anyone want to try it, I have assayed it first as his taster” [1226]) refers to the action of tasting a meal before the king in order to make sure that it contains no poison;¹⁹ Montaigne uses this concept in the moralistic sense of trying to lead a model life, of sampling edifying scenes and anecdotes.

A special use of ‘essai’ is found in the realm of chemistry: “essayer de l’or” means to verify the purity of gold; “[q]ui a veu des enfans essayans de renger à certain nombre une masse d’argent-vif” (III 13, 1043 b) (“Have you ever seen children making assays at arranging a pile of quicksilver into a set number of segments?” [1209]) is an echo of this particular usage, although Montaigne here employs the noun as a metaphor for the entire text of the *Essais*. In order to understand the novelty of Montaigne’s image, one has to take into account the alchemical process, through which, according to the initiated, the philosopher’s stone will be recovered.²⁰ The essay, then, can be said to develop an alchemy of the mind, that fuses and combines well-known matters in a personalized and original presentation. In a legal context, “mettre à l’essai” can signify a test or a proof or even trial and ordeal, such as in I 14, 59 a (“essay de vertu”). Moreover, ‘essai’ denotes the action of experimenting, of using something for the first time. It signifies a person’s first attempt, such as in “coup d’essai” (III 9, 941 b), which Montaigne, in a metapoetical statement, contrasts with his notion of addition (‘alongeail’) and continues “J’adjouste, mais je ne corrige pas” (“I make additions but not correc-

¹⁸ “Quant aux facultez naturelles qui sont en moy, dequoy c’est icy l’essay” (I 26, 145 a); “C’est icy purement l’essay de mes facultez naturelles, et nullement des acquises” (II 10, 387 a).

¹⁹ Huguet gives “récipient servant à déguster” (crater) as an additional definition. This might lead to the notion of cornucopia and eclecticism that T. Cave has developed in *The Cornucopian Text*.

²⁰ Bonaventure Des Périers, *Cymbalum mundi*. According to Jacques Tahureau’s *Dialogues*, mercure/quicksilver is one of the raw materials required for the process.

tions" [1091]), thus contrasting the immediately successful turn with the hesitating search for an appropriate expression. 'Essai' is furthermore found in the context of a competition, of an attempt to succeed, as, for example, in the dialogical movement of the essay "De l'art de conferer". To put somebody to the test, to weigh or to assess an opponent in the above-mentioned essay, therefore, can also mean to interview or interrogate him. From the image of the balance, an instrument for weighing things, it is possible to lead to that of counting money and counting experiences, weighing them and ordering them according to their rank.²¹ For Montaigne, to take possession of the text would mean to internalize it through digestion or distillation. Literature is conceived as an exchange between the individual and the writer Montaigne, as well as between the writer and the reader.

Since the middle of the sixteenth century the word "essai" specifically describes the first productions of a writer who is about to engage in a new literary genre.²² Montaigne's sentence "Il [La Boétie] l'[*De la servitude volontaire*] escrivit par maniere d'essay, en sa premiere jeunesse, à l'honneur de la liberté contre les tyrans" (I 28, 182 a) ("He wrote it, while still very young, as a kind of essay against tyrants in honour of freedom" [206]) takes up this particular usage. As a literary term, "les Essais" is established in the official posthumous edition, wherever Montaigne engages in a critique of his own work. There are two exceptions in the 'a' stratum of the text, where the plural noun is used for the entire collection of treatises: one is "les essais du jugement" in connection with a description of the literary work in progress (I 50, 289 a). In a companion essay, Montaigne judges his work "si ces essays estoyent dignes qu'on en jugeat" (I 54, 300 a) ("if these *Essays* were worthy of being judged" [351]). Similarly, in II 17, 637 a, he writes: "Tant y a que, sans l'advertissement d'autrui, je voy assez ce peu que tout cecy vaut et poise, et la folie de mon dessein. C'est prou que mon jugement ne se defferre point, duquel ce sont icy les essais" ("I can see well enough, without other people telling me, how little all this weighs and is worth and the madness of my design. It is already something if my judgment, of which these are the assays, does

²¹ F. Gray, *La Balance de Montaigne: Exagium/Essai*.

²² See the dictionary by Robert. See also the examples presented by J. C. Dawson, "A Suggestion as to the Source of Montaigne's Title: 'Essais'": Clément Marot, *Adolescence Clementine*, 1532 ("Ce sont oeuvres de jeunesse, ce sont coups d'essay"); Rabelais, *Gargantua*, Prologue, 1534 ("A quel propos, en voustre advis, tend ce prelude et coup d'essay?"); François Sagon, "Coup d'Essay" 1537, a poem in which he attacks Marot's use of the expression "coup d'essay".

not cast a shoe in the process" [742]). Again and again he uses the term in order to underline the triviality of his project or his inadequacy in carrying it out. "Si mon ame pouvoit prendre pied, je ne m'essaierois pas, je me resoudrois; elle est tousjours en apprentissage et en espreuve" (III 2, 782 b) ("If my soul could only find a footing I would not be assaying myself but resolving myself. But my soul is ever in its apprenticeship and being tested" [908]) is a typical usage, characteristic of the entire project of the *Essais*.²³

Immoralism

As we have seen in the eighth essay of the third book, Montaigne posits himself as an example. He is a moralist, a 'Seelenprüfer' or 'Menschenprüfer', according to the Nietzschean translation of the term.²⁴ In compliance with this definition, which I will briefly explore, the moralist neither intends to develop a moral doctrine based on ethical judgment, nor does he depict universal moral norms. Instead, he plays on morality's double face. (That is why Montaigne can identify with the hanged delinquent, present his own person as a negative example, and still expect a didactic effect.²⁵) This is an "immoralist" technique, which Nietzsche explains in *Götzendämmerung*:

Ob wir Immoralisten der Tugend S c h a d e n thun? - Eben so wenig, als die Anarchisten den Fürsten. Erst seitdem diese angeschossen werden, sitzen sie wieder fest auf ihrem Thron. Moral: m a n m u s s d i e M o - r a l a n s c h i e s s e n (Sprüche und Pfeile, 36, KSA 6, 65).

Whether we immoralists do virtue any harm? - As little as anarchists do princes. Only since they have been shot at do they again firmly sit on their thrones. Moral: one must shoot at morals.

²³ Two additional meanings may be mentioned: one is found in Dawson's article and links the essay to "les jeux floraux", that is, poetry competitions; the other takes this up and links essay and eroticism (W. Müller-Frank, *Erfahrung und Experiment*, 287).

²⁴ *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* I 36 and II 5.

²⁵ With regard to this technique, which might be reduced to a mere warning against flattery, Montaigne can draw on Plutarch's "Life of Marcus Cato" (I. Konstantinovic, *Montaigne et Plutarque*, 480). However, he transforms, adapts, personalizes and intensifies it. He thus employs, according to Pascal's and Malebranche's critique, an art of persuasion that is difficult to pin down.

The immoralist is a revolutionary. He turns the world upside-down, as, for example, in *Über Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinn*, where Nietzsche deconstructs the Platonic notion of the idea together with the Kantian categories. The immoralist presents actuality in an inverted mirror. Instead of defining concepts of truth and lie on the basis of current moral precepts, he defines them extra-morally, from beyond the realm of good and evil. In order to lift morality off its hinges, he uses a rival set of rules of conduct as a lever arm, including the "transvaluation of values", the "eternal recurrence", or "ressentiment".

Despite his being an innovator, the Nietzschean immoralist still considers himself the heir to a particular literary tradition. Contrary to the English moralists, who describe contemporary manners, characters, customs, and practices in order to ameliorate them, and who set up a mirror corresponding to Christian virtues - or to Christian virtues turned utilitarian, as in the case of Bentham -, the immoralist considers a morality that claims to be valid for all as a paradox. The English happiness of the common herd, according to him, leads to egalitarianism and mediocrity. That is why all moral philosophy, which in general is associated with the English philosophers, is boring and lacking in grace and honesty as well as in interesting malice (*JGB* 228). German morality, if it existed, would first and foremost pander to that people's love for obedience. If despite mental laziness and lethargy the Germans did decide to participate in greatness, they would suddenly be confronted with the need to improvise or to command - unthinkable if it had not been taught to them before (*M* 207).

French morality, which is a morality that is not based on 'dogma' nor on the mentality of "sublime cripples", but on that of great Christian human beings, automatically creates its counterpoint. The opponent of the moral man is the free spirit, who is at the same time the moral man's worthiest adversary (*M* 192). French morality can thus be called 'esprit'. All that the Germans have to offer in reply to 'esprit' is 'mind', 'knowledge', and 'soul' (*M* 193). On the contrary, says Nietzsche in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*:

(Ist ein Moralist nicht das Gegenstück eines Puritaners? Nämlich als ein Denker, der die Moral als fragwürdig, fragezeichen-würdig, kurz als Problem nimmt? Sollte moralisieren nicht - unmoralisch sein?) (228).

(Isn't a moral philosopher the opposite of a Puritan? Namely, insofar as he is a thinker who considers morality questionable, as calling for question marks, in short as a problem? Should moralizing not be - immoral?).

It is Nietzsche's intention to look at morality from the point of view of psychology (*JGB* 23). With its help he will be able to prove the derivation of the good from the bad drives, their mutual dependence, the necessity of the bad drives (hatred, envy, avarice) in themselves, and the need for their intensification. The free spirit, that is, the finest, most honest, malicious 'conscience' of the day, is the only person who possesses enough courage to annihilate morality. After the pre-moral and then the moral man, he, the extra-moral man, evaluates human acts according to their unintentional or unconscious motivation. The unmasking of the belief in morality's intentionality is thus morality's self-overcoming (*JGB* 32).

In contrast to all (moral) psychology before him, Nietzsche's new psychology is not any more in the service of morality (*JGB* 47). The new psychologist is aware that pity is his Achilles heel and that he therefore must wear a mask which will help him to come to terms with the fact that greatness in human beings is not to be found:

Der Erfolg war immer der grösste Lügner, - und das "Werk" selbst ist ein Erfolg; der grosse Staatsmann, der Eroberer, der Entdecker ist in seine Schöpfung verkleidet, bis in's Unkennbare; das "Werk," das des Künstlers, des Philosophen, erfindet erst Den, welcher es geschaffen haben soll; die "grossen Männer," wie sie verehrt werden, sind kleine schlechte Dichtungen hinterdrein; in der Welt der geschichtlichen Werte herrscht die Falschmünzerei (*JGB* 269).

Success has always been the greatest liar - and the "work" itself is a success; the great statesman, the conqueror, the discoverer is disguised by his creations, often beyond recognition; the "work," whether of the artist or the philosopher, invents the man who has created it, who is supposed to have created it; "great men," as they are venerated, are subsequent pieces of wretched minor fiction; in the world of historical values, counterfeit rules.

Nietzsche seeks out the niches of immorality in the human soul, draws a portrait of inconsistencies as well as of the nature of mundane everyday life. Thus, he does not perform the task of a traditional pedagogue, but instead strips any display of morals off its vanities. This depiction of the all too human as a general human condition allows him to level out ethical as well as social differences. Montaigne's position can now be defined as that of the Nietzschean 'immoralist', a critic of accepted social codes, who weighs or assays souls, including his own, in order to verify their degree of resistance to ingrained yet absurd customary morality.

Montaigne as Reader and Writer

Similar to the criminal who is hanged in order to prevent potential imitators, Montaigne himself poses as a moral delinquent, warning his readers of his faults. The moralistic sources for the essay “De l’art de conferer” are named in “Des livres” (II 10), where the author quotes Seneca and Plutarch as his best-loved authors.²⁶ In “De l’art de conferer”, we find several direct quotes from Plutarch’s *Moralia*, which he had read in the translation of Amyot (1572).²⁷ Montaigne likes both Plutarch the moralist and the historian, yet feels particularly drawn to the moralist, even when Plutarch writes history.²⁸ That which Montaigne appreciates above all is this author’s ability to form an authoritative opinion by way of comparison; this is exactly the quality that Plutarch liked best in himself.²⁹

²⁶ “Je n’ay dressé commerce avec aucun livre solide, sinon Plutarque et Seneque, où je puyse comme les Danaïdes, remplissant et versant sans cesse. J’en attache quelque chose à ce papier, à moy si peu que rien” (I 26, 144 c).

²⁷ “[C]’est Plutarque, depuis qu’il est François” (II 10, 392 c). At the beginning of the essay “A demain les affaires” we find: “Je donne avec raison, ce me semble, la palme à Jacques Amiot sur tous nos escrivains François, non seulement pour la naïveté et pureté du langage, en quoy il surpasse tous autres, ny pour la constance d’un si long travail, ny pour la profondeur de son sçavoir, ayant peu développer si heureusement un autheur si espineux et ferré (car on m’en dira ce qu’on voudra: je n’entends rien au Grec; mais je voy un sens si beau, si bien joint et entretenu par tout en sa traduction, que, ou il a certainement entendu l’imagination vraye de l’autheur, ou, ayant par longue conversation planté vivement dans son ame une generale Idée de celle de Plutarque, il ne luy a aumoins rien presté qui le desmente ou qui le desdie); mais sur tout je lui sçay bon gré d’avoir sçu trier et choisir un livre si digne et si à propos, pour en faire present à son pays” (II 4, 344 a).

²⁸ “Plutarque est admirable par tout, mais principalement où il juge des actions humaines” (II 31, 691 a).

²⁹ “Plutarque aime mieux que nous le vantions de son jugement que de son sçavoir” (I 26, 156 a). I. Konstantinovic, *Montaigne et Plutarque*, 72) says about the *Lives*: “Pour Plutarque, le champ de recherches, ce sont les vies exemplaires. Il voit le héros dans toute sa complexité; mais ce qui subsiste est l’exemple, pour que l’on connaisse un homme meilleur, et pour que l’individu en profite. L’intention de Montaigne est de partir de l’analyse de soi-même, et son champ de recherches est l’individu. Sa conception littéraire de l’“anti-exemple” ne peut cacher une étude orientée vers la connaissance de l’homme; enfin au lecteur contemporain plus attentif il laisse entrevoir l’utilité publique. Il en va de même pour la conception du genre littéraire employé. D’un côté, en face de Plutarque qui écrit des Biographies parallèles, l’ouvrage de Montaigne veut se présenter comme une autobiographie de l’“anti-exemple”. De l’autre, on admettra qu’autant les *Oeuvres morales* sont des essais, autant les *Essais* sont des oeuvres morales. Par les procédés qu’il emploie, Montaigne incorpore l’expérience de l’oeuvre de Plutarque à la sienne. Mais sa réaction est une opposition. Et si la philosophie du moral-

Any author who writes in order to form his readers' attitude does not pretend to hold their attention throughout an extended narration nor does he display continuous stylistic excellence. Rather, he writes in order to highlight a particular moral insight in a particularly beautiful stylistic turn. If Montaigne, in the course of his own reading of Plutarch, hits upon one of those passages that happens to correspond with his own writing, he adds it to his collection of essays (I 26, 145 a). It is this politeness that is characteristic of the moralistic writers, who have "cette notable commodité pour mon humeur, que la science que j'y cherche y est traictée à pieces décousues, qui ne demandent pas l'obligation d'un long travail, dequoy je suis incapable" (II 10, 392 a) ("are strikingly suited to my humour in that the knowledge that I seek from them is treated in pieces not sewn together (and so do not require me to bind myself to some lengthy labour, of which I am quite incapable)" [463]).

A specific manner of writing demands a specific technique of interpretation:

J'ay leu en Tite-Live cent choses que tel n'y a pas leu. Plutarque en y a leu cent, outre ce que j'y ay sceu lire, et, à l'aventure, outre ce que l'auteur y avoit mis. A d'aucuns, c'est un pur estude grammairien, à d'autres, l'anatomie de la philosophie, en laquelle les plus abstruses parties de nostre nature se penetrent (I 26, 155 a).

I have read hundreds of things in Livy which another has not found there. Plutarch found in him hundreds of things which I did not see (and which perhaps the author never put there). For some Livy is purely a grammatical study; for others he is philosophy dissected, penetrating into the most abstruse parts of our nature (175).

Interpretation consists in the reader's freedom to rediscover a text according to his personal reading experience. This is also the way Montaigne wishes to be read himself. He confesses to omitting his borrowings and looks for the ideal reader who will be able to unweave the textual fabric of the essays:

J'aimeray quelcun qui me sçache deplumer, je dy par clairté de jugement et par la seule distinction de la force et beauté des propos. Car moy, qui, à faute de memoire, demeure court tous les coups à les trier, par cognoissance de nation, sçay très bien sentir, à mesurer ma portée, que mon ter-

iste grec aboutit à une attitude 'dogmatiste', le caractère essentiel de la pensée de Montaigne est un anti-dogmatisme absolu".

roir n'est aucunement capable d'aucunes fleurs trop riches que j'y trouve semées, et que tous les fruicts de mon creu ne les sçauroient payer (II 10, 388 c).

I will love the man who can pluck out my feathers - I mean by the perspicacity of his judgement and by his sheer ability to distinguish the force and beauty of the topics. Myself, who am constantly unable to sort out my borrowings by my knowledge of where they came from, am quite unable to measure my reach and to know that my own soil is in no wise capable of bringing forth some of the richer flowers that I find rooted there and which all the produce of my own growing could never match (458).

These flowers are transformed by the author's hand and incorporated into his text, which becomes a storehouse of personalized well-known images (III 12, 1033 c). The act of plucking out feathers or discovering gems constitutes the act of reading the essay which, in imitation of the Erasmian *Adagia*, constructs a verbal texture around a proverb, paradox, or metaphor. In the essay III 8 the notion of conversation unfolds its meaning only in the process of interpretation as a history of associations.

Montaigne and Plutarch

It is possible to argue that the *Essais* build a bridge between Plutarch's normative morality³⁰ and a different modern morality exemplified by the Nietzschean, and by extreme Foucauldian, unnormative descriptions of an individual's qualities. One source for "De l'art de conferer" is certainly a sixteenth-century translation of Plutarch's treatise "Du trop parler", which can be said to illustrate to perfection Amyot's mastery of the Greek and French languages, and which consequently would offer itself first to an intertextual study of the essay's sources.³¹

Garrulousness is a vice difficult to cure; this is the introductory statement of Plutarch's treatise. Talkative people do not listen. They only use one of nature's gifts, that is, language, but reject that of hearing. Garru-

³⁰ H. Friedrich, *Montaigne*, 79; see Amyot's "Épître dédicatoire au Roi", Charles IX, where he expresses his intention to present the *Moralia* that "tendent et conduisent à mesme fin que les livres saints, c'est à sçavoir de rendre les hommes vertueux".

³¹ R. Aulotte, *Amyot et Plutarque*, 223. Plutarch's treatise is not quoted as a source for the essay III 8 in the editions by A. Micha, by M. Rat, or by M. A. Screech; I. Konstantinovic only refers to it with regard to one specific quote in her list of sources for the essay.

lousness is a vice comparable to drunkenness and intemperance. For any word that is safely enclosed in the mouth does no harm, but it acquires wings as soon as it is pronounced and becomes a rumor:

mais depuis que la parole est issue de la bouche, comme de son port, il n'y a plus de rade où elle se peut retirer, n'y ancre qui la sceust arrester, ains s'en volant avec un merveilleux bruit & grand son, en fin elle va rompre contre quelque rocher, & abismer en quelque gouffre de danger celui qui l'a laissée aller.³²

but as soon as the word has issued forth from the mouth as from its harbor, it has no home any more where it can retreat, nor anchor which might hold it, but it is moving with great noise and sound, and in the end it will throw against a rock or make disappear in an abyss of danger the person who has uttered it.

Words tend to degenerate into provocative or idle talk, as interlocutors cease to assay, test, or judge the speaker. The importance of silence in any oral interaction, that is, the time for deliberation, can therefore not be overemphasized, since it will in the end facilitate an exchange of opinion or mutuality.

& celui qui est interrogué peut penser à ce qu'il a à répondre, & non pas à l'estourdie se ruer incontinent en langage, & presser tellement l'interrogant, qu'on ne luy donne pas presque loisir de parachever sa demande, en sorte que bien souvent l'on responde toute autre chose que ce que lon aura demandé (119).

the one who is interrogated can think about that which he has to answer so as not to precipitate himself into speech headlong and incontinently and to press the interlocutor so much that he has hardly time to finish the demand, so that often one responds something quite different to that which would have been asked.

Discourse has to be meaningful and profitable as well as graceful and pleasurable. Above all, one should always keep in mind the maxim: "On se repent souvent d'avoir parlé: de s'estre teu, jamais" (120) ("One often repents to have spoken; to have been quiet, never").

"Comment il faut ouïr" is another of Plutarch's moral treatises that underlie "De l'art de conférer". This treatise is complementary to the pre-

³² Jacques Amyot, *Les oeuvres morales et meslees de Plutarque*, 114.

ceding one and written as a piece of advice given to Nicander on how to listen to any kind of discourse, how to beware of flatterers, and how to learn the art of interpretation and judgment. Of all the stimuli, says Plutarch, it is sound that has the greatest influence on the passions. Sound is therefore both positive and negative, and one has to learn how to use it. Unlike the tennis game (“jeu de la paume”), where each player receives and hits the ball in one short moment, there is a difference in understanding and speaking during word play.

A ceste cause faut-il oster ce qu'il y a de trop & du superflu au langage. & s'arrester à chercher le fruit mesme, & suyvre en cela l'exemple non des bouquetieres qui font les bouquets & les chapeaux de fleurs, mais des abeilles: car ces femmes-la choisissans à l'oeil des belles & odorantes fleurs & herbes, en tissent & composent un ouvrage qui est bien souef à sentir, mais qui au demourant ne porte point de fruit, & ne dure qu'un seul jour: mais les abeilles bien souvent volans à travers, & par dessus des prairies pleines de roses, de violettes, & de hyacinthes, se poseront sur du tres-fort & tres-acre thym, & s'arresteront dessus, preparans dequoy faire de roux miel, & ayant cueilly quelque chose qui y puisse servir, s'en revolent à leur propre besongne (31).³³

Therefore one must omit that which is too much and superfluous in speech and to begin to look for the fruit itself, and to follow in this not the example of the flowergirls who make bouquets and flower hats, but the bees: for these women choose beautiful and redolent flowers and herbs, and weave and compose a work that is nice to smell but that furthermore does not bear fruit, and that only lasts one day: but the bees, that often fly back and forth and that will go beyond the meadows full of roses, violets, and hyacinths to alight on very strong and sharp thyme, will settle down there and prepare the material for the yellow-red honey, and, having collected something that will be of use, will get down to their proper task.

Plutarch rejects affected language that is loaded with rhetorical means, as employed by the Sophists, whose talk resembles the work of wasps that do

³³ This is a common Renaissance topos, that is used in Seneca, *Epistulae* 84, 3. Montaigne adapts it in his essay on education: “Les abeilles pillotent deçà delà les fleurs, mais elles en font apres le miel, qui est tout leur; ce n'est plus thin ny marjolaine: ainsi les pieces empruntées d'autrui, il les transformera et confondera, pour en faire un ouvrage tout sien, à sçavoir son jugement. Son institution, son travail et estude ne vise qu'à le former” (I 26, 150 a). C. Bauschatz (*The Reader in the Text*, 271 note 11) reminds us that the topos is also found in Plato's *Ion*, in Horace, and in Castiglione's *Cortegiano*. According to Bauschatz, Montaigne's originality is to point out that the new work is of a different nature than the borrowed pieces.

not produce honey. The ideal listener is the one who can plunge into the sentence and into the intention of the speaker and become, so to speak, part of the other, “tout ainsi comme en jouant à la paume, il faut que celui qui reçoit la balle se remue dextrement, au pris qu’il voit remuer celui qui luy renvoye” (34) (“just like when playing at tennis the one who hits the ball has to move dexterously so that he sees the one who backs it do the same”). In both treatises, Plutarch stresses the importance of movement and exchange, action and reaction, in the same manner as Montaigne in “De l’expérience”, where he maintains that a sentence belongs half to the speaker, half to the listener (III 13, 1066 b). The latter should follow and react to the movement of the former as well as pay attention to the overall development of the verbal exchange.

Conversational Models

‘Conferer’ in Montaigne’s time comprises the notions of ‘converser’, ‘conferendi’, ‘controverser’, and ‘disputer’. In its last meaning the verb refers to a dialectics. It is the aspect of discussion (‘Auseinandersetzung’) that is illustrated by Montaigne in the initial move of “De l’art de conferer”. Such a conceit is characteristic of the author’s way of thinking and writing, as can be seen from other passages in the *Essais*, where he defines concepts in an etymological play with their opposites. One example is “De la diversion” (III 4). In this essay, the author consoles a lady by diverting her attention away from her grief (‘consolation’ becomes ‘diversion’).³⁴ The same essay presents the case of Atalante who was diverted by three golden apples from winning the race against Hippomenes and thus converted to marrying him, as well as the example of Socrates who acquainted himself with death to such a degree (conversion) that he could even enjoy the thought of it (diversion). Montaigne’s play with the concept of knowledge (‘connaissance’) at the beginning of the essay “Du repentir” (III 2) is another example of his strategy of definition; here he questions the legitimacy of his project that claims to publish the private actions of a man who is extremely jealous of his privacy, leaving the attentive reader to ask himself whether ‘connaissance’ does not actually signify its opposite. The notion of conversation in sixteenth-century France, above all in the courtly circles, can be traced back to the Italian

³⁴ See also A. Delagrange’s article.

Renaissance, to the erudite banquets of Late Antiquity, and finally to Plato.³⁵

Castiglione's Cortegiano and Anti-Italianism

The most influential contemporary model for courtly conversation is Castiglione's *Cortegiano*, which Montaigne probably knew in the translation of Colin d'Auxerre.³⁶ In a nostalgic look back at four successive evenings in the Palace of Urbino during March 1507, Castiglione describes the court's preferred pastime occupation, that is, conversations, in which the duchess Elisabetta Gonzaga, Emilia Pia, her companion, and the courtiers of the palace participate. The duchess and her companion direct the social activities, but do not speak themselves. Conversation unfolds according to courtly and gallant rules; a topic is chosen and the duchess gives her assent.³⁷ The art of conversation here is a highly refined game played according to rules that are subject to the duchess's pleasure, her placitum. The game of the four evenings does not fit into a realistic depiction of the historical situation, but attempts at once to conceal and disclose opportunism under the cloak of decorum, discretion, gracefulness, and sprezzatura, qualities which the ideal courtier is bound to acquire and to display.

³⁵ With regard to the genre of the dialogue in the French Renaissance see Thomas Sebillet, *Art poétique français*: "Du Dialogue, & ses especes, comme sont l'Eclogue, la moralité, la Farce" (chap. 8). "Or le Dialogue comme genre, contient maintes especes soubz soy, que nous deduirons peu apres chacune a part soy. Mais enten premierement que ces especes ont nom noble & propre par lequel elles sont congnues: comme Eclogue, moralite, Farce. Et hors ces trois le Poeme auquel sont personnes introduittes, retient le nom generique, & s'appelle simplement Dialogue: quel est en Marot le jugement de Minos: quelz sont aussi beaucoup d'autres, que tu trouveras lisant les Poetes François, chez lesquels tu verras aussi le Dialogue estendu jusques aus Epigrammes: [...]"

³⁶ Paris 1537/Lyon 1538; mentioned twice in the *Essais* (I 48 and II 17). Pierre Villey (*Les sources et l'évolution des Essais de Montaigne*, vol I, 95) claims: "En 1595, Montaigne mentionne deux fois le *Courtisan* et chaque fois il rappelle ou discute une de ses allégations; c'est une preuve qu'il l'a relu après 1588. Mais l'influence de Balthasar Castiglione me paraît beaucoup plus importante que ce nombre de deux emprunts ne porterait à le supposer".

³⁷ "Seguitava ancor più oltre il suo ragionamento messer Federico, quando la signora Emilia, interrompendolo: 'Questo', disse, 'se alla signora Duchessa piace, sarà il gioco nostro per ora'. Rispose la Duchessa: 'Piacemi'" (*Il Libro del Cortegiano*, 36).

Montaigne's conversation represents a conscious distancing from this influential model of a court's highly mannerist game.³⁸ Indeed, the *Essais*, wherever they mention a facet of the ideal gentleman, must be seen as part of an anti-courtier trend that developed toward the end of the sixteenth century in France.³⁹ Its development reflects an economic crisis brought on by the Italian campaigns, an inflation caused by the influx of precious metals from the New World, and the growing influence of the Italians at court with the accession of Henri III. This is paralleled by the rise of Catherine de Médicis from the moment of her marriage to the future Henri II in 1533 until her control of the state after his death in a tournament in 1559. It is with her support that the king imposes new taxes, increases his entourage, in particular the number of his mignons, emphasizes display and brilliance, and curbs the institutions of learning. Gradually, two problems become associated with the court: on the one hand, Italian politics that are seen as decadent and Machiavellian and that will finally be made responsible for Barthélemy; on the other hand, Henri III's pronounced Catholicism which, among other things, inspires his Counter-Reform measures and makes him found a series of religious orders.⁴⁰ These orders, among other things, make him a saint in the eyes of some but a decadent in the eyes of many others. Montaigne is not said to have played a role in the anti-Italian movement.⁴¹ Yet to my mind, in his presentation of conversation he distances himself from a famous contemporary model, while at the same time inserting himself in a line of court criticism embodied in his own form of the dialogue.

For the humanists, like for Montaigne, the greatest advantage of the dialogue is that its open form corresponds to their love for exploration and inquiry. Every subject-matter can be seized and discussed regardless of the limits prescribed by the form and regardless of the number of interlocutors. The dialogue further permits an author to discuss unorthodox opinions in a context removed from the historical one or through the voice of fictitious interlocutors. Many Renaissance writers make use of this

³⁸ Following an interpretation of a list of Montaigne's shortcomings that we find in the essay "De la praesumption", F. Rigolot claims "elle semble prendre à rebours, et avec une ironie à peine masquée, l'idéal du gentilhomme humaniste tel qu'il était exposé dans le *Courtisan* de Castiglione" (*Les métamorphoses de Montaigne*, 198).

³⁹ P. M. Smith, *The Anti-Courtier Trend in Sixteenth Century French Literature*.

⁴⁰ "Congrégation des Pénitents de l'Annonciation de Nostre Dame" (1583), "L'ordre des Chevaliers du S. Esprit" (1578), "Confrérie des Hieronymites" (1583), "Congrégation de l'Oratoire de Nôtre Dame de Vie Saine" (1584) (F. Yates, *The French Academies of the Sixteenth Century*, pp. 152).

⁴¹ P. Smith mentions Montaigne only in passing.

strategy; however, not all of them manage adequately to cover up their criticism. An example is Henri Estienne. His *Deux dialogues du nouveau langage françois italianizé* sharply criticize royal misuse of power and the effeminacy of the French court. The dialogues were examined in 1580 by the Conseil de Genève and found to contain many offensive passages and profanations of Scripture, despite its being written in dialogical form.⁴² Another example is Jacques Tahureau's *Dialogues* (1565). The first of the dialogues depicts two conversations between the Democritic and the Cosmophile about the dangers of Italianization. The Democritic explains to the Cosmophile that since women are by nature less perfect than men, the veneration of women propagated in Castiglione's court manual is unreasonable. The Democritic satirically dismantles the strategies of the courtly lady who lets herself be treated as the soul of her lover, but refuses him artfully so as to be all the more secure of his affection. To the Cosmophile's objection that courtly love still teaches the courtier how to speak, dance, and play an instrument well, the Democritic answers that courtly affected speech and the elaborate Italian dances make the courtier a mere object of satire. Above all, Platonic love deprives him of the pleasures of true friendship between men. The danger of the Italianate vices of Ciceronianism, sodomy, atheism, assassination, moral corruption, and legal chicanery are all identified with Italian political trickery and tyranny, which will later be made responsible for the Bartholomew night.

Plato's Dialogues

Throughout pre-modern and early modern Western culture, the ultimate model for any conversation or dialogue in a literary context was Plato. Castiglione's *Cortegiano* is no exception to the rule, nor is "De l'art de conferer".⁴³ Both are quite explicitly written texts on learning how to

⁴² R. Aulotte, *Précis de littérature française du XVI^e siècle*, 165.

⁴³ Although the nineteenth century recognized the essayist in Plato (see Pater's *Plato and Platonism*), an association that might have influenced G. Lukacs' definition of Plato as the greatest essayist who ever lived, there is, to my knowledge, no study of the influence of Platonic dialogue on the *Essais*. R. Hirzel's two volume survey (*Der Dialog*) contains three pages on the dialogue's relationship to the essay in general and a short remark on Montaigne: "Ist doch der Essay auch vielfach nichts weiter als ein verkümmertes Gespräch und in manchem Essay Montaignes würden die miteinander ringenden, auf und abwogenden Gedanken sich deutlicher gegen einander abheben, wenn der Verfasser sie in die Form eines Dialogs gebracht hätte" (244). This remark is taken up by M. K. Bénouis (*Le dialogue philosophique de la littérature française du seizième*

speak well, but Montaigne's text deals with how to write well according to the models of discussion and interpretation.⁴⁴ The essay, consequently, hovers between and plays with the difference between oral and written communication and raises the question which is the superior of the two. A theory of communication is here developed on the basis of literary sources, but also on the basis of Montaigne's military experience. The latter warrants the author's distrust of the spoken word. "Si le chef d'une place assiégée doit sortir pour parlementer" (I 5), for example, compares the ancients' way of waging war to sixteenth-century warfare that uses

siècle), who maintains that Montaigne has his literary ancestors speak to each other as if in an imaginary dialogue in a mainly discursive context. Moreover, many passages of the *Essais* appear as the interior monologue of a split self (66). In an article by E. Kushner ("Réflexions sur le dialogue en France au XVI^e siècle") we find a survey of the main dialogues that were written during the Renaissance. Kushner is, in my opinion, the only scholar who explicitly mentions the kinship between the essay III 8 and (Platonic) dialogues: "'L'art de conferer' si favorisé par Montaigne n'est-il pas, par ailleurs, la forme orale et même le modèle vivant de l'essai aussi bien que du dialogue, lié à eux par l'absence du système?" (488). There is the survey by P. Schon on the multiple precursors of the essay, an article by F. Kellermann on the paradoxical importance of Plato for the *Essais* ("Montaigne, Reader of Plato"), and an essay by M. Croll ("Attic Prose' in the Seventeenth Century"), in which Plato's *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus* are briefly named as two sources for the genre of the essay. H. Friedrich says: "Der Essay Montaignes vereinigt, im direkten Verkehr mit antiken Quellen, aber durch den Zeitgeschmack ermuntert, die in ihrem Ursprung wie in ihrer Entwicklung verwandten Gattungen des Briefs und des Dialogs zu einem neuen Formgebilde. Montaigne macht sich deren gemeinsamen atektonisch-labilen Organismus zunutze, um freilich seine Anreger zu überflügeln" (*Montaigne*, 336). P. Porteau (*Montaigne et la vie pédagogique de son temps*, 14) builds an etymological bridge by briefly mentioning the fact that the arguments on both sides of the question ("disputationes in utramque partem") represent a theory for practice's sake ("par essay"). In a recent survey entitled "Montaigne et Platon", E. Simon lists the borrowings from Plato that are found in the *Essais*.

⁴⁴ P. Villey's thesis that Montaigne reread Plato's dialogues after 1588, and that therefore the *Essais* owe only a small debt to them, is untenable. Villey tries to prove his thesis on the basis of the small number of direct references to Plato that are found in Montaigne's text: in 1580, Montaigne maintains that he does not study Plato. In the 1595 edition (II 10, 394 c) he criticizes Plato, and in III 6 he has a passage translated from the *Banquet*. In addition, Villey refers to Montaigne's interest in Socrates at the time of the "Apologie de Raimond Sebond". Villey states that borrowings occur above all after 1588, which, according to him, shows that between the appearance of the fifth edition and his death Montaigne must have reread Plato's works with the aim of enriching his own text. Accordingly, in the edition of 1595, Montaigne praises the form of the dialogue that "permet de présenter avec plus de souplesse toutes les faces d'une idée. Platon, dit-il, me semble avoir aimé cette forme de philosopher par dialogues, à escient, pour loger plus decemment en diverses bouches la diversité et variation de ses propres fantaisies".

dissimulation according to Italian influence and takes advantage of honest captains who find their fortresses taken after having negotiated outside with the enemy. “Je me fie aysément à la foy d’autrui. Mais malaisément le fairoy je lors que je donnerois à juger l’avoir plustost faict par desespoir et faute de coeur que par franchise et fiance de sa loyauté” (I 5, 29 b) (“I readily trust others: but I would only do so with difficulty if ever I were to give grounds for thinking that I was acting out of despair or from lack of courage rather than from frankness and trust in a man’s word” [24]); this is Montaigne’s conclusion that provides the transition to another illustration of the failing power of the word in the next essay “L’heure des parlemens dangereuse” (I 6), where he describes how during the siege of Mussidon in 1569 the moment of dialogue between two captains was seized by the treacherous party to break an armistice. On the other hand, Montaigne does not approve wholeheartedly of the written word either. This becomes clear in the essay “Du parler prompt ou tardif” (I 10) that favors the spoken word, because speech does not require tedious disposition and elocution for which Montaigne simply has no patience;⁴⁵ the same deprecation of writing is displayed in his comments on scribbling (“escrivallerie”, III 9, 923 b) as a symptom of an epoch in disorder.⁴⁶

It is in the *Phaidros* that Plato has Socrates recite the myth of the invention of writing (274b-278b). Theuth, an Egyptian local god, presents his inventions to the Egyptian godking Thamos, because he wants all Egyptians to benefit from them. Each of the inventions is considered individually by Thamos. Judgment is passed by the two interlocutors on all of them. The invention of writing, however, provokes a dispute, because Thamos maintains that it blunts the forces of memory and that the knowledge it conveys makes the bearer conceited. Plato’s critique of writing problematizes the abstract and inconcrete nature of knowledge. Not even a brilliant turn or a textual passage can treat knowledge like a piece of property. All linguistic expression is by its nature always equivocal. It is a tool in the hand of the person that uses it. In the *Gorgias*, rhetoric is de-

⁴⁵ See the thorough analysis of this essay by B. C. Bowen in *Words and the Man*, 74-92.

⁴⁶ In “La pharmacie de Platon” J. Derrida plays with the double nature of the written word: “Un texte n’est un texte que s’il cache au premier regard, au premier venu, la loi de sa composition et la règle de son jeu. Un texte reste d’ailleurs toujours imperceptible. La loi et la règle ne s’abritent pas dans l’inaccessible d’un secret, simplement elles ne se livrent jamais, au présent, à rien qu’on puisse rigoureusement nommer une perception”.

picted as a mere art of wrapping:⁴⁷ the person who sets out to convince an audience is not responsible for the context of his speech, but is merely supposed to speak persuasively. Rhetoric, therefore, cannot be asked to convey knowledge. In the *Phaidros*, the presupposition for a good and attractive speech is that the speaker knows the truth about his subject. Socrates sets out to prove that speaking well and persuasively presupposes knowledge of the truth, that is, to be thoroughly acquainted with one's subject matter (259e1-262e4). Two objections have to be disproved: one maintains that the rhetorician in general does not follow the knowledge of the truly just, but of that which the mass of those who pass judgment considers to be truly just; the other maintains that the rhetorician does not follow that which is truly good and beautiful, but that which has the appearance of the good and the beautiful. Persuasion is therefore based on these presuppositions and not on truth. Both objections are meant to separate rhetoric from content, to free it from any responsibility for content. Although the rhetorician must know his subject-matter, Socrates continues the argument, he acquires the necessary information from sources other than rhetoric. Rhetoric is the guide of the soul. Guiding a soul, persuading an interlocutor is done in small steps, with the help of divisions and definitions. The art of rhetoric (of talking persuasively) is the art of rendering things similar to one another within the limits of possible similarities (261e); therefore, the speaker must have knowledge of things' similarities and differences, that is, knowledge of the truth. Although speaking is rhetoric and although rhetorical skill presupposes a knowledge of the subject-matter, this does not mean that any representative of this ever-present rhetoric possesses boundless knowledge of his subject-matter. Montaigne's permanent quest for truth, his conscious play with the spoken and written word, his critique of pure rhetoric and dogmatic writing as well as his critique of knowledge ('science') in general, are an integral part of the essay "De l'art de conferer" and of the essay as an emerging genre.

The Platonic elenchus is another conversational means that Montaigne inherits from the dialogues.⁴⁸ This is a method of cross-examination, of refutation, scrutiny, or assaying, which in Montaigne's function can be-

⁴⁷ See Montaigne's exclamation that may be a faint echo: "En recompense, j'empescheray peut-estre que quelque coin de beurre ne se fonde au marché" (II 18, 647 c).

⁴⁸ For the definition of the elenchus see P. Friedländer, *Plato*, vol. I chapter viii; R. Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialogues*.

come a highly efficient diplomatic means.⁴⁹ In a game of question and answer between two people and three concepts, truth is examined, leading to right knowledge and right action. The purpose of the game is to examine the central concept which has been put up for discussion in such a way that it requires an unequivocal definition (“What is truth?”). The person who poses the question wins the game if he manages to refute the interlocutor’s thesis (second concept) with the help of a third concept that has been chosen by him. At the same time, the interlocutor is asked, by means of speech acts, to undergo an experience with himself of a sort that he would be unable to make outside of the Platonic dialogue. Valid experience is achieved through the examination of norms that every human being believes to know well. The participant’s highest personal norms are never directly questioned, but are exposed or asserted as part of his personal bearing. If he realizes that he cannot justify or legitimize them without being caught in contradictions, the personal consequences are much more serious than those, for example, of a non-confrontational courtly discussion game at the palace of Urbino. Accordingly, the decorum of conversation, which we find in Cicero’s *De officiis* and *De oratore* and which does not permit emotional manipulation but aims at tranquillity, is not Montaigne’s major concern. For him, the examination or test of a person’s norms serves to bring to light important knowledge about this person himself.

Hermeneutics

“De l’art de conferer” furthermore outlines Montaigne’s hermeneutics. Hermes is the god of communication who bears messages of good and ill from god to god.⁵⁰ At the same time, he is the patron of travellers and of

⁴⁹ On Montaigne’s tactic see M. Mc Gowan, *Montaigne’s Deceits*: Montaigne’s means of persuasion include his use of modesty as self-assertion and as a means of persuasion that involves the reader in his preoccupations, his consciousness of the effects of style, deceit - a sort of dialectics - as a method of discovery, his use of paradox, his strategic use of affirmation, destructive use of analogies, and changing contexts. Montaigne’s unquestionable conversational skill and his strategic use of rhetoric very early in the reception history of the *Essais* provoked discussions as to his sincerity (Pasquier, Bouchet, Lestoile).

⁵⁰ I am here engaging in a discussion with D. Martin, who in *L’Architecture des Essais de Montaigne* declares the essays I 11-15 to be the group of Mercure and the essay III 3 the station of Mercure. A. Delagrange’s article “‘De l’art de conferer’ (III 8) ou la station de Junon” establishes a somewhat farfetched link between Juno Feronia

the rogues who may waylay them. He is the conductor of the dead to Hades. And he is depicted as a prodigious liar and trickster. He embodies the construction, transmission, and interpretation of symbols, the conveying of information, and the constructing of culture. Since communication, lying, invention, and trickery are all attributed to one god, this god indicates the polymorphous nature of human conduct. On a literary level, he points to the polysemous nature of words.

In the literature of the sixteenth century, Mercury, or Hermes, can be found depicted in all of his functions. A good example is the *Cymbalum Mundi* of Bonaventure des Périers (1537). Here the god appears as the divine messenger who is about to run errands on earth, as the trickster who has dispersed the philosophers' stone in the arena where the philosophers were disputing, according to the myth, and as the thief and liar who is in his turn outwitted by two rogues with whom he has been drinking. As says one of them, Byrphanes:

Voyla le plus heureux larcin qui fut jamais faict: car nous avons desrobé le prince et patron des robeurs, qui est ung acte digne de memoire immortele, et si avons recouvert ung livre, dont il n'est point de semblable au monde.⁵¹

Here is the luckiest theft that ever was committed, for we have robbed the prince and patron of thieves, which is an act worthy of immortality and we have also retrieved a book which has no equal in the world.

Jacques Tahureau, in *Les dialogues* (1555), links Mercure with alchemy (he symbolizes quicksilver) and thus with fraud and dishonest practice.⁵²

At the beginning of the essay "De l'art de conferer", Montaigne plays with his personality, presenting himself now as a delinquent, now as a detached observer, and professing to do the same with his literary self. At the same time, the essay is a text on rhetoric and on its inherent value, or lack of value, as well as on the teaching of rhetoric. Montaigne assumes a provocative stance while explaining the purpose of his rhetorical move. It is to incite the reader to find out when he is telling the truth and how what

(conferer) and the essay (see note 2 in this chapter). For some additional information on Mercury's relationship to language see N. Panichi, *La virtù eloquente*, 11-25.

⁵¹ Bonaventure Des Périers, *Cymbalum Mundi*, 11.

⁵² Jacques Tahureau, *Les dialogues*, 180. In Plato's *Cratylus* Hermes is equated with speech, ambiguities of language, divine and beastly nature (408). See F. Weinberg's article "'La parole faict le jeu:' Mercury in the *Cymbalum Mundi*," where she summarizes the dialogue.

is called true can be pinpointed. A close reading of the essay uncovers striking pairs of opposites that turn out to be interchangeable or mutually supportive,⁵³ as well as many polysemous nouns whose meanings oscillate according to their context. Similar to the persona of Montaigne, who is constantly repositioning himself, the shifting (con)text lends constantly new meaning to individual words. This rhetorical means can be called polysemy, language gaps, “le mot bastant”, or simply a kind of theft, where concepts are made to vacillate or to subtract from each other. The reader’s task is to listen, weigh, translate, and transfer, so that from an interpretation of the text he is led to look at Montaigne, at himself, at other interlocutors, and finally at the world.⁵⁴ The aim of this hermeneutics is to avoid the “jugement universel”, that is, to demonstrate that any general opinion must be based on an argument. “Car nous sommes nais à quester la verité” (III 8, 906 b) (“For we are born to go in quest of truth” [1051]) is one example of a general statement proffered by Montaigne himself. Having read the beginning of the essay, the reader knows that to seek truth, according to the author, does not mean to follow and to imitate an ideal, to look for unison in discussion, or to display rhetorical skill together with immense knowledge. Truth may appear everywhere, suddenly and unexpectedly.⁵⁵ What counts in the quest for truth is a chase well executed.

Montaigne’s hermeneutics is based on conversation, on dialogue. According to Hans-Georg Gadamer, we must consider language as the medium of the hermeneutic experience.⁵⁶ It is language that facilitates the fusion of two horizons in the process of understanding. A new discourse is developed between the interlocutors, because in talking they both come under the truth of the particular matter that they are discussing (“le gage”). The conversation brings about their metamorphosis into a common interest, common ground, or mutuality, in the course of which they

⁵³ Similar the article by J. Brody “‘Of the Art of Discussion:’ A Philological Reading” (see note 2 above).

⁵⁴ This dialectical nature of language can be traced back to Plato who has two definitions of dialectics. One is the art of discussion with an interlocutor; the other one, not to be found in Plato’s early works, is the art of analysis, the art to break down a complex matter into its basic elements. Montaigne’s dialectic can be set against that of Ramus, whose *Dialectique* does not demand a partner, but displays a very elaborate theory of analysis based on the purely logical links between words.

⁵⁵ “Je festoye et caresse la verité en quelque main que je la trouve, et m’y rends alaiement et luy tends mes armes vaincues, de loing que je la vois approcher” (III 8, 902 b).

⁵⁶ H.-G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, pp. 383.

do not remain what they were. In this context it is important, in this particular essay, to notice Montaigne's emphasis on the amicable or personal relationship of the interlocutors. Montaigne himself makes up for his lack of a partner by positing himself as the questioning and the answering party in the essay "De la vanité", and by indirectly criticizing his own writing through a critique of Virgil's verse (III 5).

In the case of Montaigne's essay, we consider a written text as hermeneutic discourse. The text is an imitation of an oral model and as such represents an alienation, which is to be overcome in the act of reading. This act manifests the highest task of understanding. Furthermore, the process of interpretation comprises a transfer of meaning from one world to another, from person to person, from author to reader. In order to facilitate this communication, the interlocutor or reader must answer the question of which character trait or achievement best represents himself, that is, to prove the degree of his self-knowledge, of abstraction from his own self.

Essay and Aphorism

In the preceding pages, I have analyzed "De l'art de conferer" as a representative example of the innovative genre of the personal essay.⁵⁷ A characteristic trait of the genre is Montaigne's display of modesty. It goes

⁵⁷ P. Schon, *Vorformen des Essays in Antike und Humanismus*. Two important recent studies of the essay are R. Bensmaïa's *Barthes à l'Essai* and C. de Obaldia's *The Essayistic Spirit: Literature, Modern Criticism, and the Essay*. The former aims at explaining the function or mechanism of the essay on the basis of the late Barthes as well as at integrating the essay as a genre in literary theory. The author traces Barthes's "mots-manas" back to Montaigne's "mot bastant" and defines the essay as "texte réfléchissant", that is, as a text that reflects theoretically about a certain number of classically literary problems and topics as well as a text that reflects a manner of writing that establishes a contract with the reader based on honesty. The latter study is an ahistorical view of the essay that argues for a fourth genre, for the essay as a forerunner of the Romantic Bildungsroman as well as of the modern essayistic novel of Proust, Broch, and Musil; from a literature in potentia (caught between the two eras or systems of the Middle Ages and the Classical Age represented respectively by the medieval genre of the commentary and the classical genre of criticism), according to Obaldia, the essay rises to the paradigm of contemporary criticism, that is, deconstruction.

Other useful studies are J. Mowitt's *From Montaigne to Nietzsche: Towards a Theory of the Essay*, B. Berger's *Der Essay*, T. P. Fraser's *The French Essay*, W. Müller-Frank's *Erfahrung und Experiment*, F. Hiebel's *Biographik und Essayistik*, and G. Haas's *Essay*.

in hand with an extreme importance placed on his personality, because the genre presents the moves or movements of a soul, that is, an individual state of mind or the author's temperament. The essay's topic is the search for truth; this search is not only defined as a problem, but the method of searching is enacted as a personal search. Thus the essay, being the written imitation of conversation or dialogue, is the ideal method of finding the truth and of extending the limits of human knowledge.

At the same time, Montaigne's notion of dialogue signifies an art of living, which makes the essay part of the literature of ideas, if not quite of philosophy. Montaigne's texts convey moralistic ideas, but transform them by means of an immoralistic approach that allows the author to write from the position of a delinquent, a shop-assistant, or even a dolt. One favorite source is Plutarch, who furnishes the author with a fragmentary way of writing and with an art of interpretation appropriate for the new genre. Writing and interpretation are inextricably linked and demand the active involvement of the reader in a constant weighing of the author's opinions. Consequently, another important source, namely Plato, provides with his dialogues another key for the elements that form the new genre: the essay hovers between oral and written communication, presents a hermeneutics of its own, and finally reveals Montaigne's notion of dialogue as an extremely efficient diplomatic means.

The importance of the sources shows another characteristic trait of the essay: it rewrites or reforms well-known subject-matter in trying out an original way of thinking. What is important is the manner of presentation: knowledge is masked rather than shown in technical terms, because it is knowledge that is problematized. Montaigne's use of the jousting image thus rightly turns the essay into an arena of intellectual experience.

This same intellectual experience is illustrated by Nietzsche in his preface to *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, where he demonstrates what is meant by Montaigne's maxim of "vivre à propos".⁵⁸ The physical experience of falling ill and convalescence, of death and resurrection, of ice age and spring weather, of distance and proximity, being at home and traveling, being within oneself and beside oneself is turned into a chemistry of concepts and sensations in the section "Von den ersten und letzten Dingen". This new way of writing is based on fusion, alchemy, flux, movement, and the combination of science and art. In the second part of the book, Nietzsche turns to aphoristic writing because of a dissatisfaction

⁵⁸ Of all Nietzsche's published works *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* reflects most the formative influence of Montaigne (see the "Introduction").

with the essay as a genre. This is due to a change of constitution, a mental make-up described by him as a recovery from illness in the aphorism 408, similar to a return from Hades. Nietzsche's turn to aphorism reflects his awakening to, or becoming conscious of, the spirit of the epoch: the dawning age of indiscretion, that is, the age of the traveller, of mass communication, and of the democratization of daily life, renders impossible the play between public and private life, which is the most important trait of the essay.

For both Montaigne and Nietzsche to write an essay requires a strategic move: the essayist resolves to establish and maintain a calculated distance between the public persona and the inner self. His identity as the author of this specific genre depends upon the existence of a private retreat that has been consciously constructed. For Montaigne, this is his tower with library, his private property, or that which he calls "arriere-boutique" (his innermost thoughts or his Travel Journal). For Nietzsche it would be the mountains. This meditative withdrawal or informal confession works with a dialectic of engagement and detachment and permits the author to always imagine yet another unexpressed judgment or hidden criticism. Nietzsche's *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, for example, present serious topics in a pleasing form. The remedy to philistinism, arrogance, racism, and nationalism, which are all denounced in the essays, is an extreme individualism expressing itself in a writing of intimacy. In Nietzsche's *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, the essay is replaced by the aphorism. At its best, however, in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, the essay combines science with art.

The essay has been criticized for dilettantism, for a Utopian belief in the lost unity of art and science, and for the fact that it aims at pointing out that which has already escaped science or is still escaping it. Georg Lukács, in his letter "Über Wesen und Form des Essays", defines the essay as a form of art that is situated at the greatest possible distance from life. Contrary to poetry, which takes its motives from life (and from art), it is art (and life) that serves as a model for the essay. Adorno's response, "Der Essay als Form", emphasizes the unorthodox and politically explosive element of the genre. According to him, doubt is the method of the essay, discontinuity and openness is its form, and its innermost law is heresy, because it reveals exactly the element in a thing which this thing had intended to keep unseen. Max Bense finally, in "Über den Essay und seine Prosa", characterizes the essay's method of presentation as experimental thinking or experimental communication, as catching a scent, circling, presenting the birth of a theory. The essay represents a tightrope walk

between pursuing an idea in the act of disposing its expression and engaging in the development of a theory. It is the result of a literary *ars combinatoria*. The essayist appears as an untiring producer of configurations concerning a specific subject matter.

Qu'on loge un philosophe dans une cage de menus filets de fer clersemez, qui soit suspendue au haut des tours nostre Dame de Paris, il verra par raison evident que'il est impossible qu'il en tombe, et si, ne se sçauroit garder (s'il n'a accoustumé le mestier des recouvreurs) que la veüe de cette hauteur extreme ne l'espouvante et ne le transisse. Car nous avons assez affaire de nous asseurer aux galeries qui sont en nos clochiers, si elles sont façonnées à jour, encores qu'elles soyent de pierre. Il y en a qui n'en peuvent pas seulement porter la pensée. Qu'on jette une poutre entre ces deux tours, d'une grosseur telle qu'il nous la faut à nous promener dessus: il n'y a sagesse philosophique de si grande fermeté qui puisse nous donner courage d'y marcher comme nous le ferions, si elle estoit à terre (II 12, 578).

Take a philosopher, put him in a cage made from thin wires set wide apart; hang him from one of the towers of Notre Dame de Paris. It is evident to his reason that he cannot fall; yet (unless he were trained as a steeplejack) when he looks down from that height he is bound to be terrified and beside himself. It is hard enough to feel safe at the top of a church tower, even behind open-work ramparts of stone: some people cannot even bear thinking about it. Take a beam wide enough to walk along: suspend it between two towers: there is no philosophical wisdom, however firm, which could make us walk along it just as we would if we were on the ground (671).

The oscillating, searching, and questioning movement, which all the preceding attempts at definition have brought out, is also expressed in Montaigne's images of the philosopher in a cage and the philosophical tight-rope walker. The two figures represent disclosure, an opening up, looking out for a different perspective and the philosopher's difficulty to muster the courage for this act. Yet to engage in perspectivism is exactly his task in an epoch that has abolished religious dogmatism and threatens to become enslaved to a new scientific discourse.

The art of synthesis practised by Montaigne consists in an ability to keep several viewpoints suspended in dialogue. At any moment during a dispute he overlooks two or more arguments, or several possible ways of self-representation, and chooses one of them. The others are still implied and are never discarded, but are kept tucked away in order to immediately

replace the one that is presented when it is necessary. This creates Montaigne's open, clear, and inoffensive writing, underneath which we must however perceive the philosopher's dilemma, the diplomat's cunning, and the nobleman's love for a play with abysmal thoughts.

CHAPTER TWO

COMPLEXION AS STYLE AND PHYSIOLOGY

Nous ne sommes hommes et ne nous tenons les uns aux autres que par la parole (*Essais* I 9, 37 c).

It is only our words which bind us together and make us human (35).

It can be argued that the genre of the essay emerges due to a dissolution of *dispositio*.¹ It can also be argued that the essay overrides the five traditional steps of literary composition in favor of *complicatio*,² that is, in favor of a Barthesian tactic without strategy. Furthermore, as writing a personal essay means defining and creating oneself in the very process of defining and creating the object at hand, the genre discusses the relationship between the person of the essayist himself and the essayist as he is portrayed in the text. The essayistic personality, despite the contract that it establishes with the reader, therefore bears fictional traits.³

It can be maintained that these fictional personal traits constitute the heretical nature of the essay, as Adorno defines it. They create a textual persona that serves to authorize the writing subject as posterior to the book in a disregard of causation; this can be proven by an analysis of Montaigne's preface "Au lecteur".⁴ The deictic beginning of this passage ("C'est icy un livre de bonne foy"), that separates the exterior subject from the book, establishes the authority of a voice pronouncing the words. The sentence functions as a beginning *ex nihilo* and posits the "sujet de l'énonciation" as a first cause, as a gesture that imitates the divine act of creation. It disconnects authority as well as authorship from causality in a

¹ E. Duval, "Rhetorical Composition and 'Open Form' in Montaigne's Early *Essais*".

² R. Bensmaïa, *Barthes à l'essai*, 130.

³ C. de Obaldia, *The Essayistic Spirit: Literature, Modern Criticism, and the Essay*, 15.

⁴ U. Langer, *Divine and Poetic Freedom in the Renaissance*, 110-114. In another recent interpretation of this preface by M. Simonin ("Rhetorica ad lectorem: lecture de l'avertissement des *Essais*"), that is much more traditional, the self is nevertheless recognized as a blank that needs to be filled by the reader.

process, where the self is emptied of all other material in order to become a free creator.

Thus, the Montaignean essay is a genre that conveys and construes individuality at the same time. Individuality in the realm of literature is expressed by style. Nietzsche's feeling for style is legendary. An enormous stylistic versatility is perhaps the greatest attraction of his work.⁵ The author's early preoccupation with rhetoric shows his willingness to develop and increase his rhetorical skills.⁶ Style, in his opinion, can never be normative, for good style "in itself" is mere idealism.⁷ A presentation of Nietzsche's style in the course of this chapter will help me to define Montaigne's concept of style as multiple, to point out the physiological basis of his style, and his preference for linguistic innovations as well as for writing that traces and imitates a manner of thinking in order to ensure the highest degree of individuality. This Nietzschean idea can be traced back to Erasmus' notion of the "aptum",⁸ and ultimately to Seneca and Horace. Erasmus maintains that a writer's style cannot be developed by his mindlessly imitating Ciceronian expressions, but that it must be formed according to several models in order to then be adapted to the writer's personality. Style is, thus, the most important aesthetic criterion and a mirror of the writer's inner and outer harmony and discipline. According to Nietzsche's *Geburt der Tragödie* (I), it is style that makes man both an artist and a work of art, and life itself a form of art, with life being created by Dionysos and form by Apollo.

⁵ J. Derrida in *Eperons. Les styles de Nietzsche* has most recently called attention to this trait.

⁶ E. Behler, "Nietzsche's Study of Greek Rhetoric"; "Nietzsches Sprachtheorie und der Aussagecharakter seiner Schriften"; "Friedrich Nietzsche's Theory of Language and Its Reception in Contemporary Thought"; "Nietzsches Sprachtheorie und die literarische Übersetzung als Kunst".

⁷ "Guter Stil an sich - eine reine Thorheit, blosser "Idealismus", etwa wie das "Schöne an sich", wie das "Gute an sich", wie das "Ding an sich" (KSA 6, 304).

⁸ In the *Ciceronianus* Erasmus develops a doctrine of imitation on the basis of Quintilian, Virgil, Horace, Cicero. On the basis of his judgment the writer chooses specific traits in order to write aptly, according to decorum: B. "An censes ullum eloquentis nomen promereri, qui non dicat apte?" - N. "Nequaquam, quandoquidem haec praecipua virtus est oratoris, apposite dicere". - B. "Verum illud appositum, unde perpenditur, nonne partim a rebus, de quibus verba fiunt, partim a personis tum dicentium, tum audientium, partim a loco, tempore reliquisque circumstantiis?" - N. "Maxime" (J. Chomarat, *Grammaire et rhétorique chez Erasme*, vol. II, 824). Style must be adapted to the subject (res), to the epoch, to the audience as well as to the speaker himself, to the speaker's individual personality or genius that accounts for variety, diversity and for the unnormative nature of style in general.

Contrary to the ideal of divine copia, which is prescribed by the style manuals of his epoch, Montaigne develops a discourse of plurality that seems to have its origin exclusively in the self. Yet style for Montaigne is not merely multiple; the world itself is created by different styles, that is, by discourses. The *Essais*, as we have seen, constitute an independent being and their style creates a face of its own. This face is the complexion of the (fictitious) author, or maybe of the author in the guise of Socrates, as in the essay "De la physionomie" (III 12).⁹ The faces that Nietzsche develops throughout his work - or the masks that he dons - culminate in the portrait of the *Antichrist*; accordingly, he adopts an increasingly polemical style. In their stylistic self-fashioning, both authors may create themselves as other than they are. They gradually replace their apparent factual self with a (series of) fictitious portrait(s), which, however, is (are) modeled according to the so-called personal traits. The fictitious portrait may in the end become the new factual self. Above all, Nietzsche as well as Montaigne demonstrate that with the help of style we not only bind ourselves to each other, but also keep together our own personal selves.¹⁰

Physiology in Nietzsche and Montaigne

Nietzsche's polemics can be contrasted with the low hum of Montaigne's candor, his thunderously heroic attitude with Montaigne's soft assurance, his raucously subversive style with Montaigne's felicitously skeptical one.¹¹ This distinction is appropriate especially with regard to Nietzsche's late works, beginning with the *Antichrist*. The contrast can be intensified by opposing Heidegger's notion of Nietzsche's "grand style" and Floyd

⁹ See T. Conley, "An 'Allegory of Prudence': Text and Icon of 'De la phisionomie'", H. Glidden, "The Face in the Text: Montaigne's Emblematic Self-Portrait (*Essais* III 12)", J. Compain, "L'imitation socratique dans les *Essais*", R. B. Waddington, "Socrates in Montaigne's 'traicté de la phisionomie'", F. Kellermann, "Montaigne's Socrates", E. Limbrick, "Montaigne and Socrates".

¹⁰ Unlike Erasmus, for whom the word is the mirror of the soul and literature the expression of the writer's self, Montaigne constitutes his self (or selves) by means of the *Essais*.

¹¹ D. Molner, "Montaigne's Influence on Nietzsche: A 'Raison d'Etre' in the Sun", pp. 91. Nietzsche was very conscious of this, and it was exactly Montaigne's serenity that attracted him: "Was der einzelne Montaigne in der Bewegtheit des Reformations-Geistes bedeutet, ein In-sich-zur-Ruhe-kommen, ein friedliches Für-sich-sein und Ausathmen - und so empfand ihn gewiss sein bester Leser, Shakespeare - das ist jetzt die Historie für den modernen Geist" (KSA 1, 444).

Gray's description of Montaigne's "searching style".¹² With Montaigne and Nietzsche being experts in rhetoric, it is interesting to see that both regard physiological writing as the kind of writing that is expressive of an individual's character as well as of itself, an imitation of its own original turns. Both authors display an appreciation of linguistic innovations. Both prefer long periods that develop one single thought in aphoristic form. Montaigne's style, which approaches a slow, spoken style, is certainly one of Nietzsche's stylistic ideals, because it combines nimble elegance with the overall impression of a quiet amble. Montaigne and Nietzsche are anti-Platonists with a strikingly similar relation to the notion of truth. They dismantle scholastic rhetoric with a view to forming their own. Montaigne's critique of the humanistic attitude toward knowledge and the universities illustrated in my close reading below might be compared to Nietzsche's criticism in the unfashionable observation on Schopenhauer, where he contrasts the traditional teaching of science ("Wissenschaft") with an innovative teaching of culture. While it has been maintained that Montaigne "is a quiet version of everything that Nietzsche admired, of everything that he valorized",¹³ I would argue that Montaigne represents an influence that accompanies Nietzsche throughout his career, similar to the lifelong discussion which he led with Wagner and Wagner's ideas, yet not as strongly controversial. Although Montaigne's influence, like Wagner's later, is a formative influence by contrast, I hope to give some arguments in favor of the view that Montaigne remains interesting as a literary companion, because Nietzsche will be tempted throughout his career to bring out the elements of nonconformity, which are found in Montaigne's texts, by overdrawing them in his own.

Nietzsche's aesthetics are analyzed by Martin Heidegger in *Der Wille zur Macht als Kunst*. Nobility (distinction), logic, and beauty are its basic features as well as the grand style. The grand style is the effect of a grand passion and represents a unity of two opposing forces: that is, of intoxication and beauty, of creativity and form. The grand style is a classical style, because it embodies calm, simplification, abbreviation, and concentration of power. Power is a person's ability to sustain the great antitheses of human existence. Within the domain of art, power may be seen as a counter-movement to nihilism and as a topic treated by physiological aesthetics. According to Heidegger, Nietzsche emphasizes mastery as a prerequisite to calm; consequently, the grand style expresses a unity of chaos

¹² F. Gray, *Le style de Montaigne*, 252: "style chercheur".

¹³ D. Molner, "Montaigne's Influence on Nietzsche", p. 92.

and law, a yoking of extreme opposites, as well as man's free disposition over this yoke that is ever recreating the law, a law which in itself is always about to become. The grand style is the fundamental unit of art as well as its essence, and therefore it is the essence of existence. Real grandness, according to Heidegger, does not only subdue its extreme opposite, but transforms it into itself; it appropriates this opposite in such a way that it does not disappear, but makes it unfold its intrinsic nature. Grand style in consequence represents the active will to Being, in which this will resolves Becoming in itself. Thus, the highest feeling of power is the simplicity of a state of calm; in this state, opposites are saved in the unity of the yoke that is itself being transfigured in the act.¹⁴ Such an act of transformation, as Heidegger sees it described by Nietzsche in *Götzen-Dämmerung*.

Two aphorisms on Montaigne's style in Nietzsche's *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* mention some characteristic traits of this author's writing. One of them is garrulousness that is due to a delight in ever new twists of the same thing (97); in the other, "L'ordre du jour pour le roi" (22), the king will be told about the arrival of Montaigne, who always jokes so agreeably about his illness. This remark alludes to the salutary effect which Nietzsche sensed in Montaigne's writing or which he imagined in his conversation. This effect is due partly to an ability to turn physical problems into witty items of discussion. Style is thus the expression of an author's physiology, and his physiology becomes a source of poetic inspiration. Nietzsche is convinced of this fact and adapts it to his own use and temperament in the vivid aphorism 93 of *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* ("Aber warum schreibst denn du?"). In this dialogue a figure A describes himself as different from the large group of writers who, pen in hand, begin to think instead of beginning to write. A also distinguishes himself from the group of writers whose imagination dries up as soon as they are faced with an open ink-bottle. For A, writing comes naturally and is so much part of his being that he is ashamed of it; writing is like going to the bathroom, and even talking about it in a parable disgusts him. That writing must be regarded, at a certain age, as the excrements of an old mind is the opinion of Montaigne, who decries his text as "les herbes sauvages et

¹⁴ Let us for a moment disregard the transformation of Heidegger's "grand style" into the colossal architectural structures of the Hitler regime. The notion of the grand style as such refers to the rhetorical means of paradox. With regard to Montaigne, A. Glauser (*Montaigne paradoxal*), B. Bowen (*The Age of Bluff*), and M. McGowan (*Montaigne's Deceits*) have dealt with this feature of style.

inutiles, songes, fantaisies”, or as “chimeres et monstres fantasques”, to name only a few metaphors.

Montaigne’s preoccupation with the relationship between body and soul and the effect of this relationship on the writer can be found throughout the *Essais*. In “De la praesumption” (II 17), for example, we find a passage on the softening effect of beauty that is followed by a remark on the considerable and legitimate role which the body plays in life.¹⁵ The physiological knowledge on which such Renaissance preferences are based is summarized by Jean Fernel, the most influential physician in France during the second half of the sixteenth century, who in 1542 publishes *De naturali parte medicinae* and in 1554 *Medicina*.¹⁶ The former systematizes all the facts about the “artes naturales” that were known at the time and separates medicine into five parts, of which physiology assumes first rank. According to Fernel, within the human system, that consists of body and soul, the soul legitimizes the existence of the body. All vital functions and physical activities are engendered by the soul. The link between body and soul is established by animating principles (“spiritus”). According to Fernel’s concept, the body is a perfectly organized system that is intended by the creator to function as vehicle and salvation for the soul. One example of Montaigne’s interest in physiological knowledge can be found in the confluence between skepticism and the body in the “Apologie de Raimond Sebond”.¹⁷ The essay “De l’exercitation” (II 6) has the author, with great curiosity, watch himself suspended between death and life. Other examples are his metaphors that transform traditionally sublime concepts into palpable presence - suffice it here to refer to the author’s metaphors for writing - as well as the essay “De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres” (II 37), which turns Montaigne’s stone into a means of literary inspiration. Underlying the project of the *Essais* is, of course,

¹⁵ “Ceux qui veulent desprendre nos deux pieces principales et les sequestrer l’une de l’autre, ils ont tort. Au rebours, il les faut r’accoupler et rejoindre. Il faut ordonner à l’ame non de se tirer à quartier, de s’entretenir à part, de mespriser et abandonner le corps (aussi ne le sçauroit elle faire que par quelque singerie contrefaite), mais de se r’allier à luy, de l’embrasser, le cherir, luy assister, le contreroller, le conseiller, le redresser et ramener quand il fourvoye, l’espouser en somme et luy servir de mary; à ce que leurs effects ne paroissent pas divers et contraires, ains accordans et uniformes” (II 17, 622 a).

¹⁶ For additional information with regard to the physiological knowledge that we find in Montaigne see the chapter “Le moment du corps” in *Montaigne en mouvement* by J. Starobinski.

¹⁷ U. Langer, “Scepticism and the Body in the Apologie: Montaigne’s Blancher de la neige”.

the author's temperament; it is sanguine melancholy, according to the age a humor that can partake of the best and of the worst, of genius and of madness, and that must therefore be suitably occupied.

Montaigne's intellectual disposition, his humor, for example, is the result of a particular physical nature. Accordingly, style is the direct expression of the author's thought (*KSA* 2, 610 [131]); the author's thought is based on his physiology. Physiology, therefore, concerns observations about the formation of language based on human nature. Nietzsche's use of physiological knowledge is partly influenced by Montaigne, who attempts to put color into popular expressions, to test the innovative force of language, and to learn to devise movements that are unusual in a sentence. This knowledge is determined in part by nineteenth-century physiological practice in which the French are leading in Europe. Claude Bernard comes to mind and his experiments concerning the influence of different climates on the human system.¹⁸

Nietzsche maintains that style must be innovative above all:

Man weiss vor mir nicht, was man mit der deutschen Sprache kann, - was man überhaupt mit der Sprache kann;
[E]s hat nie Jemand mehr von neuen, von unerhörten, von wirklich erst dazu geschaffnen Kunstmitteln zu verschwenden gehabt;
[D]ie vielfachste Kunst des Stils überhaupt, über die je ein Mensch verfügt hat (*KSA* 6, 304).

Before me, it was not known what could be done with the German language-what could be done with language in general:
[N]obody was ever in a position to squander more new, unheard-of artistic devices that had actually been created only for this purpose:
[T]he most multifarious art of style that has ever been at the disposal of one man.

This high-handed self-criticism defines style as an art that is independently innovative and that seduces by its sheer variety. Style serves to convey a state or an inner tension of pathos by means of signs, including the tempo of these signs. The writer's art consists in deliberately choosing the signs, the rhythm, the punctuation (gestures), according to his own personal preference and according to the degree to which he deems his audience

¹⁸ Physiology was popular in the nineteenth century as shows a string of books concerning the topic, among which are J. Anthèlme Brillat-Savarin, *Physiologie du goût* (Paris: 1826), H. de Balzac, *Physiologie du mariage* (Paris: 1829), and Baudelaire's "De l'essence du rire". The latter was originally conceived as "Physiologie du rire".

worthy of confidence. What is more, style is the art of the great rhythm, “der g r o s s e S t i l der Periodik zum Ausdruck eines ungeheuren Auf und Nieder von sublimer, von übermenschlicher, Leidenschaft” (KSA 6, 304) (“the great style of long periods to express a tremendous up and down of sublime, of superhuman passion”).¹⁹ Prose style must be like poetry or music.

The tempo of a language's style is linked to the character of its race, that is, to the average tempo of a people's metabolism, maintains Nietzsche in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (28). German style is slow and heavy on principle, incapable of the presto or allegro, even in Goethe's texts. Among the German writers, Lessing is the only exception because he is a born actor (“Schauspieler-Natur”) whose love for acting permits him to imitate French grace. Yet the unattainable masters of style, according to Nietzsche, are Machiavelli, Petronius, and Aristophanes. In the preface to *Morgenröte* (5) Nietzsche claims the lento to be indicative of his recently acquired stylistic maturity. The slow tempo of the written text demands a thorough reader who is a connoisseur of philology.²⁰

Nietzsche's concept of style is based on the physiological knowledge regarding the union of passion and intellect. This union is one important point in the teaching of Zarathustra.²¹ The grand style that is so much admired by Nietzsche is, according to his own words, a heritage from classical antiquity:

Dies Mosaik von Worten, wo jedes Wort als Klang, als Ort, als Begriff, nach rechts und links und über das Ganze hin seine Kraft ausströmt, dies minimum in Umfang und Zahl der Zeichen, dies damit erzielte maximum in der Energie der Zeichen - das Alles ist römisch und, wenn man mir glauben will, v o r n e h m *par excellence*. Der ganze Rest von Poesie wird dagegen etwas zu Populäres. - eine blosse Gefühls-Geschwätzigkeit (KSA 6, 155).

¹⁹ Nietzsche's use of the notion of period derives from Latin grammar and refers to the way in which sense is expressed by the sentence as a whole and is held in suspense until the delivery of the last word. A period is an enlarged proposition, due to the insertion of parts of propositions. Nietzsche is concerned with testing the limits of suspense, thus increasing the number of enlargements or adding surprising turns.

²⁰ “[J]ene ehrwürdige Kunst, welche von ihrem Verehrer vor Allem Eins heischt, bei Seite gehn, sich Zeit lassen, still werden, langsam werden-, als eine Goldschmiedekunst und -kennerschaft des W o r t e s, die lauter feine und vorsichtige Arbeit abzuthun hat und Nichts erreicht, wenn sie es nicht lento erreicht” (KSA 3, 17).

²¹ “‘Leib bin ich und Seele’ - so redet das Kind. Und warum sollte man nicht wie die Kinder reden? Aber der Erwachte, der Wissende sagt: Leib bin ich ganz und gar, und Nichts ausserdem; und Seele ist nur ein Wort für ein Etwas am Leibe” (KSA 4, 39).

This mosaic of words in which every word, as sound, as locus, as concept, pours forth its power to left and right and over the whole, this minimum in the range and number of signs which achieves a maximum of energy of these signs - all this is Roman and, if one will believe me, noble par excellence. All other poetry becomes by comparison somewhat too popular - a mere emotional garrulousness (*Twilight of the Idols*, trans. Hollingdale, 115).

The best example of such style in Nietzsche's work are the prose compositions in *Also sprach Zarathustra*. Let us consider a passage entitled "Die sieben Siegel (Oder: das Ja- und Amen-Lied)". The title, which alludes to *Revelations* 5:1, presents a book which is incomprehensible to most and which can be looked at and opened only by the few deigned worthy, whereas the subtitle "Yes and Amen Song" points to acceptance and affirmation of life or of existence, that is, to Nietzsche's art of living.²² This is a typical contradiction, and it represents in a nutshell Nietzsche's constant and authoritative changes of attitude toward one subject-matter. What follows is a song in seven stanzas, each of which is succeeded by the same refrain, and each of which presents the poetic self, that is, the text 'Nietzsche' in different variations or guises. In the first stanza, the self is 'gewitterschwanger' and 'blitzschwanger', that is, big with thunder or lightning, or to make the transition to abstract thought, full of great ideas. In the refrain the prophetic self appears in the shape of thunder or as pregnant, and it uses Nietzschean stock images, of the ring and recurrence, of woman and eternity.²³ The second stanza stages the self as a Mosaic defiler of graves whose wrath is renewed, whereas the third stanza conjures up a pagan atmosphere with the world as a gambling table. In the fourth stanza we find the elements of fire and earth mixed in a jug, as in a cornucopia which nourishes a giant force. The fifth and sixth stanzas present the self as a seafarer and as a dancer respectively, while the seventh stanza finally treats of bird and song, that is, birdsong. It is worth mentioning that the hypothesis of the first stanza is presented with a disregard for "consecutio temporum"; Nietzsche uses the present tense instead of the past. This, as well as the three epithets that he adds, contributes to the prolongation of the sentence, and thus to extensive tempori-

²² For a presentation of this art of living see A. Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*.

²³ H. Staten, in chapters 6 and 9 of *Nietzsche's Voice*, explains these images in the context of Nietzsche's work.

sation, which causes the reader to read slowly and carefully and to take in the many poetic elements, such as climactic adjective enumerations, metaphors, and proverbs.

A possible physiological source known to both Nietzsche and Montaigne may be Hippocrates and the discussion of his medical theories in the *Phaidros*. In this dialogue we find Plato's thoughts concerning the art of rhetoric and its history (266d-267d). If the rhetorician wants to make the audience understand, if he wants to use rhetoric methodically, he must know the nature of the soul (270b1-271a8). In order to illustrate his point, Plato uses the parallel of medicine: in the same way that the physician has an effect on the body the rhetorician or writer has an effect on the soul. The basis of this comparison is the Hippocratic insight that it is not sufficient for the physician to know the human body and its parts; he must also take into account diverse shapes and therapeutical situations. To classify and to know how to treat an illness is, therefore, not enough; in order to help a patient the physician must know a great number of similar cases. Experience needs to be enriched by a high capacity of distinction or differentiation. This Platonic comparison, that has been condensed into the topos of the writer as a "good physician", signifies not only that speaking and writing must adapt to the demands of a particular situation and to the audience or reader, but first and foremost that language itself originates in the physical or physiological facts of human nature. Montaigne's essays "en cher et en os" (III 5, 821 b) and his impertinently "genital" approach (III 5, 868 b) derive from here, as well as the fact that for the author, style and the movements of the mind are one,²⁴ just as body and mind are one.²⁵

Anti-Ciceronianism, Anti-Platonism, and Regional Pride

The French writers of the sixteenth century do not follow a normative grammar because the French vernacular is just beginning to extend since the end of the fifteenth century. Its development starts with an effort to purify Latin as well as the vernacular. Individual provinces then introduce edicts that allow witnesses in the lawcourts to use French. By and by, entire trials and inquiries are held in French, until the article 111 of the Ordonnances de Villers-Cotterêts in 1539 proclaims French the official ad-

²⁴ "Mon stile et mon esprit vont vagabondant de mesmes" (III 9, 973 c).

²⁵ "Il n'est rien plus vraysemblable que la conformité et relation du corps à l'esprit" (III 12, 1035 b).

ministrative language in the entire country.²⁶ Language here serves as an element of nationalism that helps to unify the country through the unifying power of the vulgar itself.²⁷ Robert Estienne's dictionary contributes to the movement as do the poets, who intervene in the question of the language. Cicero and Plato are the two models that first will be imitated and then surpassed in the course of the development of French vernacular writing.

In the essay "De la praesumption" (II 17), we find an extended self-criticism that displays Montaigne's stylistic likes and dislikes, while at the same time giving prominence to his good judgment: he uses unpolished and disdainful language and consciously disregards the rules of disposition. Since he intends to avoid affectation and to favor brevity, he sometimes falls into the other extreme and becomes obscure. He tries to imitate the spoken style of Seneca, but would really like to equal his ideal, Plutarch. Montaigne favors stylistic ease and naturalness. Style is not the order in which an author arranges his thoughts, but a mode of writing guided by Montaigne's way of talking or conversing.²⁸ Style is natural and original in that it totally conforms to the nature of the speaking or writing subject and to his thinking.²⁹ Slyly modest, Montaigne presents his studiously informal style as simply following the impulse of an average human being; at the same time he is fully conscious of the fact that anti-Ciceronianism, pursued with ever-increasing skill, creates a style that in the end almost neutralizes its intention. Montaigne is of the opinion that he cannot write anything but short texts.³⁰ His style is meant to come off as

²⁶ P. Rickard, *La langue française au seizième siècle*. See F. Charpentier's article "Un langage moins ferme" that demonstrates in how far Montaigne still considers Latin the firmer and clearer language.

²⁷ D. Trudeau, "L'ordonnance de Villers-Cotterêts et la langue française: histoire ou interprétation".

²⁸ "Comme à faire, à dire aussi je suy tout simplement ma forme naturelle: d'où c'est à l'aventure que je puis plus à parler qu'à écrire. Le mouvement et action animent les parolles, notamment à ceux qui se remuent brusquement, comme je fay, et qui s'eschauffent. Le port, le visage, la voix, la robbe, l'assiette, peuvent donner quelque pris aux choses qui d'elles mesmes n'en ont guere, comme le babil" (II 17, 621 a).

²⁹ "Quand j'en saisis des populaires et plus gayer, c'est pour me suivre à moy, qui n'aime point une sagesse ceremonieuse et triste, comme faict le monde, et pour m'esgayer, non pour esgayer mon stile, qui les veut plustost graves et severes (au moins si je dois nommer stile un parler informe et sans regle, un jargon populaire et un proceder sans definition, sans partition, sans conclusion, trouble, à la guise de celui d'Amafianus et de Rabirius)" (II 17, 620).

³⁰ "[Q]u'il n'est rien si contraire à mon stile qu'une narration estendue: je me recoupe si souvent à faute d'haleine, je n'ay ny composition, ny explication qui vaille, ignorant au-delà d'un enfant des frases et vocables qui servent aux choses plus communes" (I 21, 105 c).

anti-rhetorical, disjointed, curt, and completely unlearned, unlike, for example, that of the rhetoricians. It is, according to his own words, a comical and private style, such as used in letters.³¹ In an imitation of the "genus humile", short periods are used as well as deliberate asymmetry between clauses according to the model of the Senecan amble. This style is part of the anti-Ciceronian movement of the second half of the sixteenth century.³² At the same time, Montaigne's prose aims from the very beginning of his essayistic undertaking at becoming poetic prose.³³

According to Montaigne, who reads Cicero not for his eloquence or knowledge, the Roman writer does not offer enough substance and argument, but obscures his point by over-elaborate and lengthy preparation ("longueries d'apprets").³⁴ A gratuitous love for the elegant turn is Cicero's greatest fault, who went so far as to publish the idle talk of his private letters. Given the power of rhetoric following the upheaval of republican Rome,³⁵ Montaigne concludes that in a well-ordered monarchy there can be no place for it and that therefore it must be bad. In his two essays on education Montaigne criticizes the indiscriminate imitation of Ciceronian eloquence that is contrasted with his own education of the personal judgment.³⁶ Style for the anti-Ciceronian writer should adapt to the differences of men and times. In the years between 1575 and 1625, Latin and the vernacular are used in equal amount by educated people; this means that writers should actively contribute to the development of written French by adapting Latinisms, by overcoming the Ciceronian model

³¹ "J'ay naturellement un style comique et privé, mais c'est d'une forme mienne, inepte aux negotiations publiques, comme en toutes façons est mon langage: trop serré, desordonné, coupé, particulier" (I 40, 246 b).

³² M. Croll, *'Attic' and Baroque Prose Style*. See also G. Mathieu-Castellani, "L'Intertexte rhétorique: Tacite, Quintilien, et la poétique des Essais". Mathieu-Castellani reminds us that the critique of rhetoric is a literary topos which permits Montaigne to perform a transvaluation of that which he seems to devalorize with it.

³³ "Si j'estois du mestier, je naturaliserois l'art autant comme ils artialisent la nature" (III 5, 852 c) "La poesie populaire et purement naturelle a des naïveté et graces par où elle se compare à la principale beauté de la poésie selon l'art" (I 54, 300 c).

³⁴ "Si j'ay employé une heure à le [Cicéron] lire, qui est beaucoup pour moy, et que je r'amentoive ce que j'en ay tiré de suc et de substance, la plus part du temps je n'y treuve que du vent: car il n'est pas encor venu aux argumens qui servent à son propos, et aux raisons qui touchent proprement le neud que je cherche" (II 10, 393 a).

³⁵ "L'eloquence a fleury le plus à Rome lors que les affaires ont esté en plus mauvais estat, et que l'orage des guerres civiles les agitoit: comme un champ libre et indompté porte les herbes plus gaillardes. Il semble par là que les polices qui dépendent d'un monarque en ont moins de besoin que les autres" (I 51, 293 a).

³⁶ "J'aymeroie mieux m'entendre bien en moy qu'en Cicéron" (III 13, 1051 c).

with the help of Seneca, Tacitus, and Plutarch, and by favoring conciseness and accuracy over mere eloquence. While Ciceronian style gives predominance to elocution, anti-Ciceronian style favors invention.

The Platonic theory of poetic inspiration is another manner of writing that needs to be mentioned in this context, because it raises the status of the arts and of the poet. It derives from Pythagoras and Plato, who maintain that the universe is created according to numerical proportions. This first harmony rules the movement of the stars and makes the cosmos resound. Music imitates this harmony and is also determined by numbers. Aristotle applies this idea to poetry and to rhythmical prose (*Rhetoric* III 8). Among Montaigne's French precursors, Thomas Sebillet in his *Art poétique* (1548) emphasizes the high status of the arts by maintaining, like Plato, that great poets are divinely inspired children of the gods and that true poetry is of divine origin.³⁷ Joachim Du Bellay's *Défense et illustration de la langue française* (1549) makes the diligent imitation of the Ancients (Immortals) the center of a new poetic theory. He stresses that imitation must go hand in hand with an aptitude for invention; that talent alone is not sufficient, but needs to be perfected by industry, which, then again, requires a period of gestation; that the future poet must have the good judgment to choose those sources as models that correspond to his own nature (II 3). The aim of Du Bellay's manifesto is to create a generation of "gallogrecs" who will be direct heirs of Apollo. In his *Solitaire premier ou Discours des Muses et de la fureur poetique* (1552), Pontus de Tyard describes the poet's task as a Platonic ascent toward the source of beauty and wisdom of the divine one.³⁸ Jacques Peletier du Mans, in the conclusion to his *Art poétique* (1555), demands certain ethical qualities of the poet, among other things a generous inclination toward the good. The poet must set himself the highest goals, be courageous, and possess an invincible will as well as insatiable desire. Above all, he must never lose

³⁷ "Car le Poëte de vraye merque, ne chante ses vers et carmes autrement que excité de la vigueur de son esprit, et inspiré de quelque divine afflation" (Sebillet, 1).

³⁸ "[M]ontée vers la source de beauté et sapience de l'unique soleil divin". Poetic furor is defined as follows: "La fureur poétique procede des Muses (dy-je) et est un ravissement de l'Ame, qui est docile et invincible: au moyen duquel elle est esveillée, esmuë, et incitée par chants, et autres Poësies, à l'instruction des hommes. Par ce ravissement d'Ame, j'enten que l'Ame est occupée, et entierement convertie, et intente aux saintes et sacrées Muses, qui l'ont recontrée docile et apte à recevoir la forme, quelles impriment, c'est à dire, l'ont trouvée preparée à estre esprise de ce ravissement, par lequel estant esmuë, elle devient invincible, et ne peut estre souillée, ou vaincue d'aucune chose basse et terrestre: mais au contraire surmonte et surmarche toutes ces vilitez" (Pontus de Tyard, *Solitaire premier*, 21).

honor from his sight.³⁹ In Pierre de Ronsard's "Ode à Michel de l'Hospital", Kalliope receives the power to enable the poets to write verse inspired by divine and magic wisdom so that their state of sacred ecstasy will be transmitted to the reader. A pure heart is the condition for this inspiration. Although the *Essais* contain only one explicitly critical remark on Platonic style,⁴⁰ a glance at the author's favorite topics, such as his definition of friendship, of truth, of the imagination, or the furor poeticus shows him as an anti-Platonist. For him, poetry is not of divine origin, the poet is not divinely inspired, a chosen group of inspired immortals does not exist. Although Montaigne mentions Ronsard and Du Bellay as the two poets who contributed most to the development of the French vernacular, he does not accept the ideology that goes hand in hand with the poetry of the Pléiade and that finds its most memorable expression in Ronsard's "Ode à Michel de l'Hospital".

Certain French provinces enjoy an intellectual supremacy in the sixteenth century: Touraine, Normandie, Gascogne, Guyenne, together with the writers of those regions, as there are Montaigne, La Boétie, d'Aubigné, Du Bartas, and Montluc.⁴¹ The characteristic traits of the literature are spontaneity, vehemence, and a vivid style that does not shrink from nonsensical turns or even the lie. The people from the Gascogne especially are considered born orators and politicians. In d'Aubigné's *Les Aventures du Baron de Faeneste*, the Gascon is the man of make-believe. Gascons are not only regarded as dissimulators but also as thieves; accordingly, Montaigne has to profess to be free of this latter vice.⁴² They are said to be womanizers; this Montaigne accepts.⁴³ In addition, they are good soldiers.⁴⁴ Their dialect is a direct expression of all these traits.⁴⁵

³⁹ "Sache donc, quiconque se voudra fere profes de la religion des Muses, que leurs seinz antres sont inaccessibles a celui qui sera auaricieus d'autre chose que d'honneur".

⁴⁰ "La licence du temps m'excusera elle de cette sacrilege audace, d'estimer aussi trainans les dialogismes de Platon mesmes et estouffans par trop sa matiere, et de pleindre le temps que met à ces longues interlocutions, vaines et preparatoires, un homme qui avoit tant de meilleures choses à dire? Mon ignorance m'excusera mieux, sur ce que je ne voy rien en la beauté de son langage" (II 10, 394 c).

⁴¹ C. Chassé, *Styles et physiologie*, 168 note 1. I would like to add that this supremacy is a surviving form of the French regionalism from the first half of the century that we find expressed in the names of certain poets, such as Jacques Peletier du Mans, Pierre de Ronsard Vendomois, Joachim du Bellay Angevin.

⁴² "Je suis Gascon, et si, n'est vice auquel je m'entende moins" (II 8, 367 b).

⁴³ "J'ay cogneu cent et cent femmes, car ils disent que les testes de Gascongne ont quelque prerogative en cela" (II 32, 702 b).

⁴⁴ III 13, 1063 b.

“[Q]ue le Gascon y arrive, si le François n’y peut aller!” (I 26, 171 a) (“if French cannot get there, let Gascon do so” [193]) is an example of how Montaigne uses the dialect within the textual web of the *Essais* that creates

un parler simple et naïf, tel sur le papier qu’à la bouche; un parler succulent et nerveux, court et serré, non tant délicat et peigné comme véhément et brusque: *Haec demum sapiet dictio, quae feriet*, plustost difficile qu’ennuieux, esloigné d’affectation, desreglé, descousu et hardy; chaque lopin y face son corps; non pedantesque, non fratesque, non pleideresque, mais plustost soldatesque, comme Suetone appelle celuy de Julius Caesar; et si, ne sens pas bien pour quoy il l’en appelle (I 26, 219 a).

the kind of speech which is simple and natural, the same on paper as on the lip; speech which is rich in matter, sinewy, brief and short; not so much titivated and refined as forceful and brusque - *Haec demum sapiet dictio, quae feriet* [The good style of speaking is the kind which strikes home] - gnostic rather than diffuse, far from affectation, uneven, disjointed and bold - let each bit form a unity - not schoolmasterly, not monkish, not legalistic, but soldierly, rather as Sallust described Julius Caesar’s (though I do not quite see why he did so) (193).

Montaigne’s Style

Montaigne’s style rejects the rules of contemporary style manuals, which advocate Ciceronianism, in order to create a human complexion by means of a verbal texture grounded in the author’s physical aspects. Let us consider the example of a digression on the value of erudition (‘science’) from Montaigne’s essay “De l’art de conferer” (III 8, 905 b). In the paragraph immediately preceding, the author engages in a criticism of empty rhetoric as it is taught in the schools of speakery; therefore, ‘science’ in this digression means, first of all, rhetoric, and only secondly describes skill or knowledge in general. The author begins the digression with a statement of preference: “J’ayme et honore le sçavoir autant que ceux qui l’ont” (“I like and honour erudition as much as those who have it”) which he then elabo-

⁴⁵ “Il y a bien au-dessus de nous, vers les montaignes, un Gascon que je treuve singulierement beau, sec, bref, signifiant, et à la vérité un langage masle, et militaire plus qu’autre que j’entende; autant nerveux, puissant et pertinent, comme le François est gratieus, delicat et abundant” (II 17, 622 a).

rates in a second declaration. This declaration, smoothly added by the conjunction 'et',⁴⁶ qualifies his preference and expresses a reservation.

Mais en ceux là (et il en est un nombre infiny de ce genre) qui en establis-
sent leur fondamentale suffisance et valeur, qui se raportent de leur enten-
dement à leur memoire. "*sub aliena umbra latentes*", et ne peuvent rien
que par livre, je le hay, si je l'ose dire, un peu plus que la bestise (III 8,
905 b).

But in the kind of men (and their number is infinite) who make it the base
and foundation of their worth and achievement, who quit their under-
standing for their memory, 'sub aliena umbra latentes' [hiding behind
other men's shadows], and can do nothing except by book, I loathe (dare I
say it?) a little more than I loathe stupidity (1050).

The objection that presents a chain of contrasts, begins with 'mais' and refers to the initial statement by opposing 'ceux' to "ceux là"; 'science' is then contrasted with 'bestise', "J'ayme" with "je le hay", 'entendement' with 'memoire'. It is evident that the entire second proposition displays a sentence structure which is antithetical to that of the first. The citation from Seneca, which has been added in the posthumous edition, does not interrupt the flow, but provides additional support of the argument; the quote, taken from letter 33, criticizes those authors who never become independent of their literary models. The flow of the parallel relative clauses is interrupted by the lack of a third "qui", thus positing an anti-climax as climax. This asymmetrical symmetry, together with the emphatic accent of the accumulation, underline the conversational tone, while the minute distinctions and subdivisions of Montaigne's thought seduce the reader to continue. "En mon pays, et de mon temps, la doctrine amande assez les bourses, rarement les ames" ("In my part of the country and during my own lifetime school-learning has brought amendment of purse but rarely amendment of soul"); this comment on the historical and national context - interesting with regard to Montaigne's intended readers -, criticizes the universities, who neither impart ideas nor educate their students' minds. This sentence again displays the asymmetrical parallelism typical of Montaigne's style, an uneven grouping of the elements of a sentence, that is here enriched by proserhyme ("en, mon, mon, temps, amande, rarement, ames").

⁴⁶ "[E]t en son vray usage, c'est le plus noble et puissant acquest des hommes".

Knowledge on its own does not remedy a person's intellectual shortcomings, but aggravates them.

Si elle [la science] les [âmes] rencontre mousses, elle les aggrave et suffoque, masse crue et indigeste; si desliées, elle les purifie volontiers, clarifie et subtilise jusques à l'exinanition.

If the souls it meets are already obtuse, as a raw and undigested mass it clogs and suffocates them; if they are unfettered, it tends to purge them, strip them of impurities and volatilize them into vacuity.

The extended parallel, which is slightly modified, intends to hold the reader's interest in making him want to follow the sentence right to its end. The next sentence, "C'est chose de qualité à peu près indifférente" ("Erudition is a thing the quality of which is neither good nor bad, almost"), describes science in itself as neutral. It can be used with profit as well as misused. The following parallelism "très-utile accessoire à une ame bien née, pernicious à une autre ame et dommageable" ("most useful adjunct to a well-endowed soul: to any other it is baleful and harmful") is loosened up toward the end. Then follows a qualification or modification of the opposition: "ou plustost chose de très pretieux usage, qui ne se laisse pas posséder à vil pris" ("or rather, it is a thing which, in use, has great value, but it will not allow itself to be acquired at a base price") that continues right to the end of the paragraph, where it is intensified into a maxim: "en quelque main, c'est un sceptre; en quelque autre, une marotte" ("in one hand it is a royal sceptre, in another, a fool's bauble"). A transition to the next topic ("Mais suyvons"; "But to get on") indicates the end of the digression.

The paragraph develops a conceit, first in a statement, then in an analysis through antithetical pairs and antithetical sentence structure. This critique is placed in its historical context. The conceit is then pursued to the extreme of symbolizing the worlds of king and fool respectively. The digression ends in an Erasmian closure.⁴⁷ This is at once Montaigne's mimetic rewriting of a literary model and a mimetic presentation of his per-

⁴⁷ P. Schon, *Vorformen des Essays in Antike und Humanismus*, pp. 86: "revenons à nos moutons"; similarly we find in the *Essais* "retombons à nos coches", "revenons à nos bouteilles". See also R. Bensmaïa's analysis of the seductive effect in *Barthes à l'essai*, the use of seduction as described by G. Mathieu-Castellani in *Montaigne, l'écriture de l'essai*, and R. Regosin's presentation of the Montaignean circle in *The matter of My Book. Montaigne's 'Essais' as the Book of the Self*, 114. J. Starobinski's *Montaigne en mouvement* has turned Montaigne's circular thinking into an interpretive method.

sonal way of thinking, where ideas are shown in the process of their formation. In addition, the development of such a chain of thoughts in a short episode makes Montaigne's writing approach the aphoristic style that is used by Nietzsche.

A good example is aphorism 113 of *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, entitled "Zur Lehre von den Giften". This is an aphorism concerning scientific thought, which, according to Nietzsche, requires the harmonious and balanced combination of many forces. The aphorism may be regarded as an "active interpretation" of those opinions which Montaigne proffers in the above-mentioned citation from *Essais* III 8. If we trace Nietzsche's chain of arguments, beginning with the aphorism's title which suggests a negation, we note that, in a Darwinian move, he first maintains that scientific thinking is the highest achievement and a result of personal progress as well as a trait of some particularly endowed individuals from the nineteenth century. It is the effect of diverse forces (doubting, negating, deconstructing) which, if they are not balanced, degenerate into destructive drives and even into poisons. The creation of individuals who master such scientific thinking is a century-long development that is not finished yet, because most people are too specialized and only slowly accept an all-encompassing point of view or way of life. Nietzsche advocates the formation of the "higher organic system" compared to which any specialist would be a paltry ruin. Despite its authoritative and exclamatory tone, the passage uses long sentences that create a discourse which keeps its tension from beginning to end; this is achieved by intercalating each move with the preceding move in taking up one of its elements. Nietzsche's comparison of scientific thinking that is carried out in too specialized and narrow bounds to poison can be explained by pointing to his view of his own personality, one in which all the impulses of an individual coexist and come into action always according to need.⁴⁸ This approach can be compared to Montaigne's which displays the same tenor, but is expressed by means of more measured expressions.

We have seen at the beginning of the essay "De l'art de conferer" that Montaigne uses parallel as well as chiasmic constructions. Frequently, these constructions are subdivided or broken up into smaller units by the additions from the posthumous edition. This creates a slowly flowing style and makes for the colloquial character of the text. Montaigne's frequent and cumulative use of adverbs effects the ambling style typical of the *Essais*, which is again intensified by his use of the moralist's present tense

⁴⁸ See H. Staten, *Nietzsche's Voice*, cit. in n.19, chapter 1.

and the prevalent present participle.⁴⁹ The conversational aspect of this particular essay III 8 is emphasized by the reader-directed statements which introduce an unexpected turn of the argument or a new direction in a chain of thought, the objections to an imagined interlocutor, and Montaigne's answers to possible questions. Thus we find not only exclamations, asides, interruptions, interjections, requests, invitations, challenges and provocations, but above all, the interrogations. The essay itself, that is, the act of assaying, is a dissimulated question. In the age of the ever-threatening Inquisition, Montaigne anticipates and disarms possible interrogators by asking and answering his own questions in his own way, softening the aggressiveness of the problems raised by the Reformers and lending them a persuasive tone by the use of personal examples.⁵⁰

With regard to imagery, the most important metaphor is that of conversation as a chase or hunt, and that of the chase as life. Other important images are taken from the world of the sportive contest.⁵¹ These metaphors permit Montaigne to give style to his character and to see character as an artistic plan. Nietzsche's notion of style as moral psychology in aphorism 290 of *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* ("Eins ist Noth"), which expresses the relationship between self-control and writing, can also be discovered in Montaigne's text: "Or je me pare sans cesse, car je me descriis sans cesse" (II 6, 358 c)⁵² is just one example of many. The creation of a "persona" by means of textual self-fashioning happens in a metaphorical transfer from orality to poetry, and from poetry to clothing. The author facilitates the creation of a complexion through style that creates an independent being, or even a multiplicity of beings in a histrionic gesture, for we know that the highest perfection, according to Montaigne, is "jouyr loialement de son estre" (III 13, 1096 b), that is, to adapt one's personality to circumstance.

Montaigne's and Nietzsche's Style

I would like to engage in a comparative discussion of some passages from "De l'art de conferer" and some passages from Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*,

⁴⁹ "Tout homme peut dire veritablement; mais dire ordonnéement, prudemment et suffisamment, peu d'hommes le peuvent" (906).

⁵⁰ J. Tansey, "Montaigne and the Interrogative".

⁵¹ J. Brody, "Of the Art of Discussion: A Philological Reading".

⁵² "I am therefore ceaselessly making myself ready [adorn myself] since I am ceaselessly describing myself" 424).

two texts whose similarly dialogical nature is evident.⁵³ One needs to underline the fact that both writers regard literature as an exchange, that of the individual with the author of the text and that of the author with the reader(s). In Montaigne's essay on conversation, the numerous images of weighing and balancing which refer to the title of his work, are enriched by those from the domain of sports; yet images of commercial exchanges are also present here (p. 900: "le ... commerce ... avec les esprits bas et maladifs"; p. 901: "Je sçay par assez d'experience combien en vaut l'aune"; p. 902: "vigueur de son commerce"), further illustrating the dialogical moves which Montaigne recommends and which he refines to what one might call a conversational pedagogy (p. 900: "[l']horreur de la cruauté me rejette"; "amender à reculons"). Nietzsche's preface to *Ecce Homo* begins by demanding of his readers to hear him and not to mistake him for someone else. In the same aphorism we also find a metaphor from the realm of trade: "to live on one's own credit" here refers to Nietzsche's being his own best witness for his existence, because recognition has been denied him by many of his colleagues.

One must also see the love of etymology that is characteristic of both Nietzsche and Montaigne. The art of "conferer", for example, in the course of Montaigne's essay becomes a distaste for unison. Nietzsche engages in a similar play on words in his preface to *Ecce Homo*, a play on the notion of "Gegensatz-Natur" that enables him not only to distance himself from the common notion of the virtuous man but also describes Nietzsche as a split personality. The diverse shapes that are contained in one individual personality is also one of Montaigne's favorite topics, and he turns it into an asset: "Si je parle diversement de moy, c'est que je me regarde diversement. [...] *Distingo* est le plus universel membre de ma logique" (319) ("I speak about myself in diverse ways: that is because I look at myself in diverse ways. [...] The most universal article of my own Logic is *distinguo*" [377]. In the essay III 8, Montaigne varies this motif by emphasizing his love of being judged in whatever form he happens to be at the moment (p. 902: "Je prens si grand plaisir d'estre jugé et cogneu qu'il m'est comme indifferent en quelle des deux formes je le soys"). Nietzsche quite bluntly exposes himself as both a decadent, as his opposite, and as Dionysos in "Warum ich so weise bin" (2).

Meandering between the different parts of Montaigne's form, the text of the *Essais* remains permanently unresolved; so does Nietzsche's work,

⁵³ I draw my inspiration from F. Gray's list of rhetorical terms in *La Balance de Montaigne: Exagium/Essai*, pp. 13-74.

which toward the end of his literary career is increasingly fed by his posing in different guises, as Christ, Antichrist, Socrates, professor, or moralist. Therefore, the latter's characteristic indifference and nonchalance become almost unrecognizable in Nietzsche's text. Yet both writers depart from the same premise:

Nous sommes tous de lopins et d'une contexture si informe et diverse, que chaque piece, chaque momant, faict son jeu. Et se trouve autant de difference de nous à nous mesmes, que de nous à autrui (321).

We are entirely made up of bits and pieces, woven together so diversely and so shapelessly that each one of them pulls its own way at every moment. And there is as much difference between us and ourselves as there is between us and other people (380).

Since both Nietzsche and Montaigne are moralists, they like to incorporate maxims in their texts; both the essay and the aphorism lend themselves to this preference. Often, a passage from the *Essais* or an aphorism end in a maxim which is being prepared by the rhetorical means of temporisation, which both writers master equally well. A good example is found in the beginning sentences of *Essais* III 8 (p. 899), where a paragraph concerning criminal law gradually introduces the reader to the topic of the essay. Nietzsche maintains in his preface to *Ecce Homo* (4) that the tempo of Zarathustra's speeches is a tender adagio; I have shown above the stylistic features by means of which this is achieved. The maxims and witticisms at the end of many Nietzschean aphorisms thus provide a carefully prepared yet surprising climax, such as in "Warum ich so weise bin" (2), which ends in a self-presentation that in its sly and circular argument could have been directly borrowed from Montaigne.

Hyperbole is yet another rhetorical means employed by both Nietzsche and Montaigne. The latter describes his style as moving along "à sauts et à gambades" and frequently comments on the self-engendering and self-sufficient nature of his text that will continue, he affirms, as long as there is ink and paper in the world. Nietzsche's hyperboles often occur in the form of exclamations or questions, for example, in the rhetorical questions that entitle the different parts of *Ecce Homo*, but sometimes also in personal statements which we only now begin to unmask as ironic: "Ich muss ein Halbjahr zurückdenken, dass ich mich mit einem Buch in der Hand

ertappe", has been of particular interest to some readers of Nietzsche.⁵⁴ That this kind of hyperbole borders on irony and represents a use of masks is now evident and can be explained by Nietzsche's treatment of style, on which he comments in "Warum ich so gute Bücher schreibe" (4). One of the author's many masks is that of solitude (*Ecce Homo*, preface, 3 and 8), which is a sentiment that is expressed, among many places, in the essay on conversation (p. 899: "me faire éviter"; p. 901: "J'aime à contester et à discourir, mais c'est avec peu d'hommes et pour moy").

Conclusion

For Montaigne, the (personal) essay and its style, communication and writing, are inextricably linked. He not only develops a hermeneutics but also a theory of communication.⁵⁵ In my analysis of the essay on conversation we have seen how Montaigne uses verbal communication as well as nonverbal communication. The latter signifies the nonverbal cues that we employ in making a speech act, such as gestures that translate in the text as pace and Montaigne's personalness. Montaigne recommends indirect speech acts, such as active listening and responsiveness represented by the tennis game and the jousting image. He describes his choices in making and blocking the performance of speech acts through choices of episodes (paragraph length) and multiple languages of the self. In an inversion, Montaigne's notion of communication comes to be based on literacy. The author here plays with a notion of reflexivity: conversations for him are forms of action that affect relationships and those relationships in turn affect conversations. Each of our relationships to the world must be seen as secondary and derived, as emerging out of the conversational background of our lives, because it is people's responsive understanding of each other that allows them to create coherent spheres of existence. For Montaigne, the conversational background of life extends to the fashion-

⁵⁴ "Warum ich so klug bin" (3): "I must count back half a year before catching myself with a book in my hand", trans. W. Kaufmann, p. 242. See also T. Brobjer, "Nietzsche's Reading and Private Library, 1885-1889", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 58 (1997), 663-680.

⁵⁵ I have used J. Shotter, *Conversational Realities*; W. Barnett Pearce, *Interpersonal Communication*; J. Stewart, *Language as Articulate Contact*. Shotter's approach combines Foucault (man as defined by discourses influenced by institutions), Bakhtine (life as dialogue), and Bhaskar (ontological versus epistemological talk); moments of common reference happen by means of creating a personal vocabulary.

ing of his own personality.⁵⁶ Since the son is a metaphor for the text of the *Essais*, Montaigne has done exactly what he intended.

⁵⁶ “Et je ne sçay si je n’aimerois pas mieux beaucoup en avoir produit ung [homme], parfaitement bien formé, de l’acointance des muses, que de l’acointance de ma femme” (II 8, 383 b).

CHAPTER THREE

TEACHING JUDGMENT - SETTING EXAMPLE AGAINST METAPHOR

Bücher, welche tanzen lehren. - Es giebt Schriftsteller, welche dadurch, dass sie Unmögliches als möglich darstellen und vom Sittlichen und Genialen so reden, als ob beides nur eine Laune, ein Belieben sei, ein Gefühl von übermüthiger Freiheit hervorbringen, wie wenn der Mensch sich auf die Fussspitzen stellte und vor innerer Lust durchaus tanzen müsste (*Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* I 206).

Books that teach how to dance. - There are writers who, by presenting the impossible as possible and speaking of morality and genius as if both were merely a mood, a caprice, produce a feeling of high-spirited freedom, as if one were to get up on tiptoe and simply had to dance for joy.

Summarizing contemporary ideas, the current state of knowledge, and a treasure of classical maxims in order to present them to the contemporary readers is one intent of the *Essais*. The genre develops a hermeneutics on the basis of the dialogue, as well as a personal style that comes to create, with increasing skill, a 'complexion' of its own, an independent being. I would now like to argue that with regard to didactic writing Montaigne is caught between the need to revive the example, the pedagogical means par excellence for the humanists, and his desire to replace it with something new and more pleasurable. He personalizes the example, yet at the same time promotes metaphor as a more efficient means of teaching. The bare, unadorned example can thus be set against the imaginative and applicable metaphor.¹ Nietzsche's theory of language enables me to illustrate the me-

¹ I am partly arguing here against A. Compagnon's reinstatement of allegory in *Chat en poche: Montaigne et l'Allégorie*. Compagnon attempts to prove that the rhetorical means of allegory, which was in general avoided by the humanists, is manifest in Montaigne's text as a kind of early Pascalian "pensée de derrière", and will furnish the substance for the latter's 'gradation', a hierarchical presentation of intellectual ability or conscience. Seen through the lens of Pascal, Montaigne can be said to sometimes use a certain "pédagogie de la difficulté qui rappelle Saint Augustin" (97), or "la forme de ce raisonnement qui déplace le lieu de la vérité de l'énoncé à l'énonciation, du discours à l'intention" (103). This form of argumentation is used in the service of the established

chanics of the metaphorical transfer. Contemporary readers of Montaigne are then tested for their rightful understanding of the author's pedagogical intention. I argue that Montaigne's aim of teaching what is ethical ("le jugement"), which is mainly laid down in his two essays on education "Du pedantisme" (I 25) and "De l'institution des enfans" (I 26), is (meant to be) misunderstood by his incompetent readers - after all, Montaigne writes for an elite ("les gens d'entendement"). Nietzsche, who will be my modern implied reader of the *Essais* and Montaigne's ideal student, provides an interpretation that in certain ways grasps the humanist's intention much more keenly and transforms it much more convincingly than many sixteenth-century readers were able to do.

Example

A brief look at the essay "Par divers moyens on arrive à pareille fin" (I 1) illustrates Montaigne's early treatment of the example.² In the case of an

order. Montaigne's allegorical writing, according to Compagnon, necessitates an art of deciphering, of reinterpretation, which he demonstrates in an analysis of the essay "Des cannibales".

The much more convincing analysis of Montaigne's images has been made by C. Clark in *The Web of Metaphor*. According to Clark, much of what Montaigne has to say in the *Essais* is contained in the images and, above all, in the metaphors. In her chapter III 2 she analyzes the images of education and concludes "that Montaigne uses the conventional imagery of education with a degree of independence if anything greater than that which he displays when writing on style. It is only relatively rarely that we find him using a stock image in its conventional application. In particular, it is notable that very few of his prescriptions for improved education are expressed in the form of images" (63). In order to compare the two positions I would state that allegory is a rhetorical means which simply is far too hierarchical, dogmatic, and didactic to find Montaigne's approval. Metaphor corresponds to his love for suggestion.

The images in Montaigne have always attracted the critics' attention. For Sainte-Beuve, they constitute Montaigne's style, "une rhapsodie d'images" and "une figure perpétuelle et à chaque fois renouvelée" (*Port-Royal*, Paris: Hachette, 1860, vol. II book III, 442 and 444); for F. Gray, they are "des phares de sa pensée" (*Le style de Montaigne*, 249); for M. Baraz, they represent "le recours à la pensée incarnée" and his "contemplation poétique" (*L'être et la connaissance selon Montaigne*, 59 and 86); see also G. Norton's article "Image and Introspective Imagination in Montaigne's *Essais*".

² Both H. Friedrich and K. Stierle interpret this essay: the former considers it as representative of Montaigne's moralistic method that refuses to accept archetypes and instead analyzes individual cases (*Montaigne*, pp. 139); the latter maintains that Montaigne's *exempla* do not illustrate actions but reactions to actions and thus depict the unforeseen or conjecture ("Geschichte als Exemplum - Exemplum als Geschichte", pp. 372).

offense that one has inflicted upon an opposing party, one has to expect the adversary's revenge, which one can counter either by signalling submission or by displaying courage. The essay's thesis is followed by a series of three historical examples: Edward Prince of Wales, Scanderberg Prince of Epirus, and the Emperor Conrad III; at various moments, all three of them are touched by acts of extreme courage and therefore show mercy to their enemies. In a fourth instance, Montaigne describes his own reaction toward these examples and toward acts of pity in general. This autobiographical case is followed by a self-criticism with regard to Montaigne's personal choice of examples. All of them serve to illustrate a particular kind of virtue, which is far more moving than the brutal courage that soldiers display in the fury of battle and that is also called virtue. A striking illustration of such cruelty is Dionysius, who leads Montaigne to define the inconstancy of human nature in general. The essay ends with a counter-example to the preceding historical ones, that of Alexander, who, together with Socrates and Cato the Younger, is one of Montaigne's heroes. Yet in the dialogical set-up of historical figures, Alexander comes to illustrate a moral failing, that is, cruel envy of an enemy's courage during the conquest of Thebes.

The pedagogical value of exempla is widely acknowledged in the Renaissance and constitutes one of the textual bases of the *Essais*. An important literary inspiration for the humanists is certainly Seneca's *Epistulae morales* 6,5 ("Longum iter est per praecepta; breve et efficax per exempla"), but Montaigne's immediate precursor is probably Erasmus' *De ratione colligendi exempla*. Collected and classified according to various categories, examples can be inserted into any text in order to illustrate a fact or a situation, to emphasize a certain person's traits, or to prove a general statement. They are used to catch the reader's eye in that they frequently underline the sensational aspect of an action or the essentially moral or immoral character of a human being. Moreover, they can render the unknown familiar by emphasizing common traits, as Montaigne explains.³ He endeavors to arrange his findings according to a personal scale as well as according to their specific interpretative value. By no means should his examples be seen as absolute; they are his personal choice.⁴ The reader is invited to enlarge the collection or to start one of his own.

³ "Ces exemples estrangers ne sont pas estranges, si nous considerons, ce que nous essayons ordinairement, combien l'accoustumance hebeate nos sens" (I 23, 107 c).

⁴ "Les discours sont à moy, et se tiennent par la preuve de la raison, non de l'experience; chacun y peut joindre ses exemples: et qui n'en a point, qu'il ne laisse pas de croire qu'il en est, veu le nombre et varieté des accidens" (I 21, 151 b).

However, most examples are trivial, because exemplarity generally is not a characteristic trait of the human being.⁵ This difficulty is apparent in the above-mentioned essay on the mediation of vengeance (I 1), which, apart from being written in a very formal style,⁶ merely enumerates and accumulates historical and well-known examples; this presentation is then followed by a brief philosophical consideration and by one last example that illustrates the universal validity and manifold use of a quite arbitrary series of models. In the course of writing the *Essais*, Montaigne will gradually become conscious of the much greater validity of the personal example.⁷ At the same time, faced with critical voices⁸ (or merely forestalling them), he will feel bound to justify his choice of the self as an example that surpasses all others with regard to its vivid force and persuasive power. Therefore, in a protective declaration of the *Essais*' insignificance, he calls them a little bust for private use (II 18, 646 a). The personalization of the historical example which Montaigne undertakes is not only innovative and slightly unorthodox (he alludes to a creation ex nihilo), but in the end is also not sufficient with regard to his poetic intention;⁹ since these citations occur in the essay on experience, where the author in detail discusses his culinary preferences and his changes of taste, we may once again refer to the physiological basis of his thought, in this case quite literally the palate, and turn to metaphor as a more efficient stylistic means than the example.

Metaphor

In addition to the compilation of exempla, the Renaissance schoolroom uses lists of topoi or rhetorical means, the *liber locorum*, a synthesis of

⁵ "Il est fort peu d'exemples de vie pleins et purs" (III 13, 1090 c).

⁶ Montaigne frequently uses the neutral pronoun 'on', and impersonal expressions, such as "il se peut dire que", "il advient que", "il est malaisé".

⁷ "Les auteurs se communiquent au peuple par quelque marque particuliere et estrangere; moy, le premier, par mon estre universel, comme Michel de Montaigne, non comme grammairien, ou poëte, ou jurisconsulte" (III 2, 20 c).

⁸ "Voire mais on me dira que ce dessein de se servir de soy pour subject à escrire seroit excusable à des hommes rares et fameux qui, par leur reputation, auroient donné quelque desir de leur cognoissance [...] Il méssiet à tout autre de se faire cognoistre qu'à celuy qui a dequoy se faire imiter, et duquel la vie et les opinions peuvent servir de patron" (II 18, 646 a).

⁹ "[T]out exemple cloche" (III 13, 1047 b); "L'exemple est un miroüer vague, universel et à tout sens" (III 13, 1067 b).

two other notebooks called the *liber styli* and the *loci communes sermonis seu phraseon*.¹⁰ The *liber locorum* is a personal collection of favorite examples on the use of rhetorical means. Metaphor, one of these means, is, according to Aristotle's *Poetics* XXI 7, the transference of a term's customary meaning either from the generic to the specific, or from the specific to the generic, or from one specific to another, or through analogy. Metaphor causes language to turn away from the literal to the figurative (*Poetics* XXII, *Rhetoric* III 1410b). This transfer necessitates interpretation, abstraction, or condensation, especially in the case of analogy. In the *Essais* the rhetorical means of metaphor is specified only twice and criticized in one of the two instances. In "De la vanité des paroles" (I 51), Montaigne engages in a harsh critique of rhetoric which he compares to make-up and to an art of lying and deception ("art piperesse et mensongere"), that flourished especially in republican Rome, where rhetoric was placed above action, thus contributing to the rise of civil war. He then writes:

Oyez dire metonomie, metaphore, allegorie et autres tels noms de la grammaire, semble-t-il pas qu'on signifie quelque forme de langage rare et pellegrin? Ce sont titres qui touchent le babil de vostre chambriere (I 51, 363 b).

When you hear grammatical terms such as metonymy, metaphor and allegory do they not seem to refer to some rare, exotic tongue? Yet they are categories which apply to the chatter of your chambermaid (343).

Contrary to this remark, Montaigne frequently talks explicitly about the pleasure he takes in creating images. So he does in "Des livres", where he explains:

[Je] sçay très bien sentir, à mesurer ma portée, que mon terroir n'est aucunement capable d'aucunes fleurs trop riches que j'y trouve semées, et que tous les fruicts de mon creu ne les sçauoient payer (II 10, 388 c).

[I] am quite able to measure my reach and to know that my own soil is in no wise capable of bringing forth some of the richer flowers that I find rooted there and which all the produce of my own growing could never match (458).

¹⁰ P. Porteau, *Montaigne et la vie pédagogique de son temps*, pp. 178.

In “Sur des vers de Virgile” he even professes: “les formes de parler, comme les herbes, s’amendent et fortifient en les transplantant” (III 5, 851 b) (“locutions are like seedlings: transplanting makes them better and stronger” [988]). The metaphor of the tennis game, which Montaigne adapts from Plutarch’s treatises, is a good example of the author’s technique of enriching his text. Many of his most memorable metaphors describe the art of writing; thus, the *Essais* alternately figure as dreams, ravings, excrements of an old mind, fantasies, hash, or inept pieces bundled together. Such metaphors are, of course, indicative of Montaigne’s anti-rhetorical attitude that again and again, paradoxically, produces a wealth of original turns.

The aspect of play in metaphor would ideally adduce and seduce children to learning: “[I]l n’y a tel que d’allécher l’appétit et l’affection, autrement on ne faict que des asnes chargez de livres (I 26, 177 a) (“there is nothing like tempting the boy to want to study and to love it: otherwise you simply produce donkeys laden with books” [199]). Metaphors awaken a student’s interest in the mechanism of their transfer and increase memorability. Nietzsche’s depiction of the intellectual process during a metaphorical transfer will thus prove helpful for my ensuing analysis of Montaigne’s use of metaphor as a pedagogical means. In the following pages I will show how Nietzsche illustrates the construction of metaphor; I will then present Nietzsche’s view of language in some of his early texts. This will be followed by an analysis of his treatment of truth, an abstract concept; I will show how Nietzsche tests the limits of metaphor as a cognitive process while defining the referential claim of the rhetorical means.

Nietzsche’s Concept of Metaphor

In *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, Socrates represents a configuration designating a movement which consists of two opposing forces, Apollinian / Socratic and Dionysian. Both forces are inherent in nature and interact there in an ever-changing relationship. At certain moments, the Dionysian force, that is, all-embracing chaos, suffering, and despair, provokes the Apollinian force to impose a frame on the Dionysian disorder, to re-establish a sense of personality and individual consciousness. This happens by way of an illusion, which makes the Dionysian appear to be working in the service of the Apollinian and which guides the individual person’s view away from the general, that is, from the orgiastic self-destruction of the Dionysian revels, and toward the particular (21). The relationship between

the two forces is like the experience of seeing and of longing to transcend this experience at the same time, while the agent is becoming conscious of the coexistence of both processes (24). In the course of the essay, Socrates becomes a concrete idea, a 'figura' standing for the recognition and fusion of the two innate drives of man.

The fragment "Über den Ursprung der Sprache" defines language as intrinsically philosophical. Language is not a conscious creation of an individual or of a group of people; it is a dynamic organism that becomes uncommunicative by excessive cultivation. According to Nietzsche, language is instinct, which he defines, ironically, in Kantian terms. In a chapter entitled "Verhältniss des Rhetorischen zur Sprache" from his *Darstellung der Antiken Rhetorik* Nietzsche establishes language as poetic by nature, that is, as projective and non-representative. Unrhetorical, natural language does not exist. On the contrary, language is, by its very nature, figuration, because words, the sound images of the soul's acts, are tropes. Nietzsche distinguishes synecdoche, metonymy, and metaphor, and attributes to the latter the capacity to give new meaning to words. In a fragment from 1872/73, Nietzsche defines culture as a process which little by little turns imitation into instinct. To think means to compare; comparison is imitation; imitation presupposes the reception of images in numerous metaphors, which are really analogies (*KSA* 7, 489 [226]). Thus, metaphors treat as equal something that has been recognized as similar in one point (*KSA* 7, 498 [249]).

In "Über Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinn" Nietzsche depicts the genesis of language as man's inborn drive to form metaphors. The metaphorical drive is an artistic drive which mediates between the subject and the object. Language, which initially is of a metaphorical nature, becomes fixed and hardened through the necessity of communication, that is, repetition. In the course of this process, the initial artistic or metaphorical drive is forgotten.

The change of emphasis from philosophy to art and rhetoric in Nietzsche's early career is due to the influence of Gustav Gerber's *Die Sprache als Kunst* (Bromberg 1871).¹¹ Gerber defines language as an unconsciously creative art drive, that is intrinsically metaphorical and needs rhetoric to bring to light its artistic essence. Metaphors are nerve stimuli created by a free and artistic perception of things. The stimulus is transformed into sensation and then becomes sound. Sound is a symbol for

¹¹ A. Meijers, "Gustav Gerber und Friedrich Nietzsche. Zum historischen Hintergrund der sprachphilosophischen Auffassungen des frühen Nietzsche".

conceptions, which form first, the root, then the word by way of specification, and finally, the concept. One important task of metaphor is to enable man to name the spiritual realm with the help of concepts borrowed from the sensual realm. Thus, language is a medium, but remains artistic in origin. Differing slightly from Gerber, Nietzsche regards metaphor as the transition from stimulus to sensation to sound. Words in general, according to him, have a metaphorical genesis.

Truth, honesty, and virtue are concepts that convey only an illusion of transcendence. The experience of seeing and of seeing beyond, which Nietzsche describes in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* by means of the Socrates figure, is transferred to the realm of the abstract in "Über Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinn". As shows the fable of the clever animals who invent cognition and die shortly after, the human intellect is unreliable. With this initial step Nietzsche abolishes the apparent world together with the true world. In the ensuing interpretation of the fable, the supposed moral ideals are reduced to merely arbitrary notions which man bestows on all qualities for lack of any better definition of their essence. These notions are based on actions that man has recognized as similar in one point. They are thus nothing but metaphors whose underlying systems are of a psychological nature and whose prerequisites are independent of speech acts. It follows that the human being is incapable of self-knowledge, because he is locked into his chamber of consciousness, to which nature has lost the key.

Nietzsche's question how the human being's longing for truth may have emerged under these conditions is therefore merely rhetorical. Truth is metaphor, even a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, anthropomorphism, that cannot describe the idea, the thing in itself, the inexpressible, or the beyond. Neither can it express that which we cannot think. Thus it is unfit to enlarge the chamber of consciousness. All that the concept of truth can produce is to suggest a relationship between object and subject, which, according to Nietzsche, is not a logical, but an aesthetic relationship; one that resembles a stammering translation into an entirely foreign language. Truth can furthermore be exchanged for any other concept, such as "lie". The history of truth is not only the history of its interpretations, but must be replaced by a genealogy of the lie. Nietzsche offers a wealth of metaphors for the concept: lie is delusion, that is, the effect of the intellect in the service of vanity; it is dissimulation, that is, a ruse with the aim of self-preservation; it is lack of self-knowledge as well as lack of general knowledge and man's indifference to his own ignorance; it is solidified social convention; it is the residue of metaphors in dogmatic form

and man's faith in the truth of this system; it is an idealistic belief in the outward form and appearance of things, and finally, simply the will to be deceived, that is, the will to power. Metaphor is, thus, not the expression of transcendence, but rather the creation of a deviant world, which, in a chain of negations, turns out to affirm the existing state of affairs.

Nietzsche's topos of the "mobile army of metaphors" emphasizes the arbitrary nature of language. In the course of his writings he will elaborate upon language as a highly idiosyncratic and self-referential system. This is done through the "active interpretation" of favorite passages, which Nietzsche appropriates and assimilates with the help of rhetorical means that he uses as tools, in particular metaphor. Linked to this technique is the question how we acquire knowledge so as to pass it on. Nietzsche's text "Der Philosoph", a fragment from the early 1870's, illustrates this process in a reflection on the struggle between knowledge and art. Knowledge, as Nietzsche maintains, is not the appropriation of objective truth, but is constituted in the process of creating fictions. Before concepts are named, before thoughts are categorized, the world is appropriated by means of images. Knowledge is a result of the interaction between the drive to knowledge and the creative will. The latter represents the power to extrapolate the "major features" of images as well as the power to synthesize their similarity. The drive to knowledge is accordingly transfigured by the imagination and by art. In consequence, knowledge itself is contingent on the metaphoricity of language and whatever is knowable is mediated by metaphor. Since metaphors enable a student to carry over learning and understanding from what is well-known to what is less well-known, they can thus render intelligible the acquisition of new knowledge that has been gained on the basis of facts that the student knew already by leaping the epistemological chasm between old knowledge and radically new knowledge.¹² Radically new knowledge, the result of changed structures of understanding, is brought about by the interactive metaphor, "anomalous" or deviant in terms of a student's "current" set of rules for understanding.¹³ This metaphor facilitates not just an extension of the existing framework to a more comprehensive one, but, through the necessity to accommodate anomaly, even requires changes in the framework of a student's understanding. His initial curiosity to interpret the transfer leads, in a process of application, to an independent acquisition of facts and

¹² H. G. Petrie, "Metaphor and Learning", 439.

¹³ I am indebted to S. R. Levin's concept of semantic deviance and deviant worlds in *The Semantics of Metaphor*. Petrie contrasts interactive and comparative metaphors.

skills. Curiosity will enable Montaigne's student to engage in a honest investigation of what strikes him as noteworthy in daily life, to render familiar social and physical reality; thus, he will not fall prey to the new science that by its very quantity threatens to overwhelm him.

"Du pédantisme" (Essais I 25)

The Senecan maxim "Non vitae sed scholae discimus" (*Epistulae morales* CVI, 12) provides the topic to be discussed in Montaigne's essay "Du pédantisme" (I 25). The essay treats of the value of Italian and French humanistic education, which are represented respectively by Castiglione's courtier and by Adrianus Turnebus.¹⁴ What distinguishes the latter from his Italian colleague is his good judgment: the Italian courtier, in contrast, stands for purely memorized knowledge, pedantry, and affected codes of conduct and dress. The little personal twist of Turnebus' robe that Montaigne notices as a slight affectation in the otherwise simple dignity of the great man, leads him to a comparison between clothes and the mind: "Et hai nos gens qui supportent plus malaysement une robe qu'une ame de travers, et regardent à sa reverence, à son maintien et à ses bottes, quel homme il est" (I 25, 139 b) ("And I loathe people who find it harder to put up with a gown askew than with a soul askew and who judge a man by his bow, his bearing and his boots" [157]). The intention of every educational institution must therefore be to teach judgment, because in the hands of a weak man, such as the pedantic preceptor, the sword of knowledge may turn into a dangerous weapon.¹⁵ Contemporary French education, bad though it may have been, Montaigne quips, was not able to destroy the "belle ame" that Adrianus Turnebus, in an ironic subversion, comes to exemplify as a steadfast soul resisting the institutionalized onslaught of dogma.

The introductory paragraphs of the essay formulate the paradox of learning: according to general opinion, the input of a vast quantity of

¹⁴ Turnebus lived from 1512 to 1565; he was a reader in Greek at the Collège Royal and the director of the royal printing press, where he printed Homer. His death raised doubts about his religious attitude and started an ideological debate between Protestants and Catholics. According to R. Trinquet's *La jeunesse de Montaigne*, Montaigne studied under Turnebus in Paris for 6 or 7 years.

¹⁵ "C'est une bonne drogue que la science; mais nulle drogue n'est assez forte pour se préserver sans alteration et corruption, selon le vice du vase qui l'estuye" (I 25, 140 a).

matter would force the human intelligence to capitulate and to retreat, so to speak, into the inner recesses of the brain. According to Montaigne, such input would force the soul to expand. All philosophers should take this idea to heart, for once their learning has helped them decide to embrace the *vita activa*, they have the opportunity to turn their philosophical knowledge into useful deeds. A counter-argument is given with Aristotle's example of a man who considered philosophical knowledge as completely useless. The author immediately reciprocates with an example of his own that demonstrates how even practical knowledge can come into disrepute.

What is factual knowledge, the traditional object of instruction? "*Nous ne sommes, ce croy-je, sçavants que de la science presente, non de la passée, aussi peu que de la future*" (I 25, 135 c) ("We only know, I believe, what we know now: 'knowing' no more consists in what we once knew than in what we shall know in the future" [154]) is Montaigne's definition. Knowledge, according to him, must be considered as movement and passage, because it consists in a course of appropriation. Montaigne will perform this process in front of his readers' eyes. The Gascon proverb that he adds illustrates the importance of method and technique in the process of teaching. For it is not that we easily become inundated with facts and are thus unable to use our intelligence, as general opinion wants to make us believe, but rather that we become accustomed to accepting others' opinions without taking the trouble to judge them.

How can judgment be taught? The author begins his argument by listing all that we should not do if we intend to develop our judgment, such as fill our memory, hide behind Cicero's, Plato's, or Aristotle's maxims, store the opinions of the Ancients instead of using them as a basis to develop our own. In the place of all this, Montaigne proposes: "*Or il ne faut pas attacher le sçavoir à l'ame, il l'y faut incorporer; il ne l'en faut pas arrouser, il l'en faut teindre; et, s'il ne la change, et meliore son estat imparfait, certainement il vaut beaucoup mieux le laisser là*" (I 25, 139 a) ("Now we are not merely to stick knowledge on to the soul: we must incorporate it into her; the soul should not be sprinkled with knowledge but steeped in it. And if knowledge does not change her and make her imperfect state better than it is preferable just to leave it alone" [158]). The superiority of French education, which seems, after all, to favor judgment, is at the end of the essay proved in the French king's easy victory over the overly cultured Italians in 1494.

"De l'institution des enfans" (Essais I 26)

"Le vray miroir de nos discours est le cours de nos vies" (I 26, 168 c) ("The true mirror of our discourse[s] is the course of our lives" [189]); Montaigne's own words could be used as a motto for the essay "De l'institution des enfans", which presents the author's personal idea of what a good French education should be like.¹⁶ Having paid his honors to Diane de Foix, Montaigne begins his treatise with advice on the parents' choice of a teacher. He should be a man with a head that is well made rather than well filled, because he must be willing to meet the students at their intellectual level.

Il est bon qu'il [le gouverneur] le [l'enfant] face trotter devant luy pour juger de son train, et juger jusques à quel point il se doit ravalier pour s'accommoder à sa force. A faute de cette proportion nous gastons tout; et de la sçavoir choisir, et s'y conduire bien mesuréement, c'est l'une des plus ardues besongnes que je sçache; et est l'effect d'une haute ame et bien forte, sçavoir condescendre à ses allures pueriles et les guider. Je marche plus seur et plus ferme à mont qu'à val (I 26, 149 c).

It is good to make him trot in front of his tutor in order to judge how far down the tutor needs to go to adapt himself to his ability. If we get that proportion wrong we spoil everything; knowing how to find it and to remain well-balanced within it is one of the most arduous tasks there is. It is the action of a powerful elevated mind to know how to come down to the level of the child and to guide his footsteps. Personally I go uphill more firmly and surely than down (169).

The student should always be encouraged to reproduce the content of lessons in numerous different ways. Only in such a process of digestion is it possible to improve what Montaigne calls the understanding ('entendement'). One important role in the educational process is attributed to conversation, another to travel. Indeed, it is the world that should be used as a schoolroom. In concord with Socrates, Montaigne rejects astronomy and emphasizes the importance of philosophy: "L'ame qui loge la philosophie doit, par sa santé, rendre sain encores le corps" (I 26, 160

¹⁶ Recent interpretations of this essay are found in a dissertation by M. Wiesmann, *The précipice and the Apple: The Functions of the Reader in Two Essays of Montaigne* (DAI 1992 June 52 (12): 4323A) and in an article by L. Kritzman, "Pedagogical Graffiti and the Rhetoric of Conceit"; the latter is an allegorical interpretation that defines teaching as the figural birth of the self.

a) (“The soul which houses philosophy must by her own sanity make for a sound body” [180]). Montaigne severely criticizes long hours of study as well as corporal punishment. Learning, according to him, should by no means grace the schoolroom only, but the student’s entire life; Montaigne thus reverses the Senecan maxim from the preceding essay on pedantry.¹⁷

The essay ends with a description of the author’s personal education, and, in a tribute duly paid, of how Pierre Eyquem required his son to learn Latin. Through constant exposition to the language in conversational teaching that included the entire village he became a child prodigy in Latin and even inspired Buchanan to write a treatise on education.¹⁸ A more traditional and less efficient method is then used to teach Montaigne Greek.¹⁹ At the end of the essay, the fruits of Pierre Eyquem’s liberal education are discussed. Here Montaigne hints at his personal tendency to let

¹⁷ This is one of the features that will be commented by Nietzsche: “‘Eine Seele, in welcher die Weltweisheit wohnt, muss durch ihre Gesundheit auch den Körper gesund machen’: so sagt es Montaigne, und ich gebe heute gerne mein Jawort dazu, als Einer, der auf diesem Bereiche Erfahrung hat. ‘Es kann nichts Muntereres, Aufgeweckteres, fast hätte ich gesagt, Kurzweiligeres geben als die Welt und ihre Weisheit’: so sage ich ebenfalls mit Montaigne” (KSA 11, 657).

¹⁸ A brief look at some educators in Renaissance Europe shows, however, that this method is common among the nobility. The representatives of Tudor humanism, for example, use it regularly. Sir Thomas Elyot’s *The Booke Named the Governor*, for example, published in 1531, aims at giving a liberal education to the sons of the gentry in Henrician England, so that they may acquire the precepts for a responsible exercise of political power. The fifth chapter of his first book “The Order of Learning that a Nobleman should be trained in before he come to the Age of 7 Years” comments on the early learning of Latin and Greek as well as on the speaking of Latin. In 1570, Roger Ascham, who had held the post of tutor to princess Elizabeth, published the first edition of his *Scholemaster*. Part one, “The bringing up of Youth”, explains first how to teach correct writing of Latin by using two ‘paperbooks’ as well as praise and gentleness, and how from there to arrive at a correct speaking of Latin. See also R. Trinquet’s *La jeunesse de Montaigne* that cites Erasmus’ *De pueris* as the main inspiration for Montaigne’s pedagogical texts.

¹⁹ Much has been made of Montaigne’s slowness: “j’estois parmy cela si poissant, mol et endormi, qu’on ne me pouvoit arracher de l’oisiveté, non pas pour me faire jouer. Ce que je voyois, je le voyois bien et, sous cette complexion lourde, nourrissois des imaginations hardies et des opinions au dessus de mon aage. L’esprit, je l’avois lent, et qui n’alloit qu’autant qu’on le menoit; l’apprehension, tardive; l’invention, lasche; et, après tout, un incroyable défaut de memoire” (I 26, 174 a). In his manual, the contemporary English pedagogue Roger Ascham distinguishes between the quick wit, who is light, unruly, inconstant, “heady and brainsick”, and the hard wit, who, in the long run, is better apt for study. According to this humanistic rule, Montaigne has an excellent disposition for a scholar.

things run their course, which, together with other peoples' complaints about him, ironically dismantles his own theory of education.²⁰

The irony in Montaigne's program is still intensified when we look back to the beginning of the essay, where the author frankly admits to his ignorance: "Et n'est enfant des classes moyennes qui ne se puisse dire plus sçavant que moy" (I 26, 144 c) ("there is no boy even in the junior forms who cannot say he is more learned than I am" [164]). "Jugement" and "entendement" are therefore the only matters that can be taught at all, if we remind ourselves of the fact that the mirror of our discourses should be our lives, and that Montaigne, despite his proverbial ignorance, is the example of a successful man. The notion of "entendement", however, in the sense in which it is used by the author, poses a problem, because "les gens d'entendement" refers to an elite of dissident humanists who would like to revive a freedom of thought which they inherited from classical antiquity; this manner of thinking develops a worldview entirely based on reason and makes every man his own legislator.²¹ The author's "belle âme", the student for whom he develops his curriculum, is theoretically already by birth a member of this group. It remains, therefore, to look at the formation of the student's judgment. Two things are instrumental in this process. One, to acquire an art of living, which Montaigne, in an ever so slightly Machiavellian tone, depicts as the capacity to do everything, yet to like to do only good things (I 26, 166 a). The second, to give writing its due.

The introductory paragraph to the essay "De l'institution des enfans" rephrases the topos of writing as procreation, which ultimately points to Montaigne's own essays as the ravings of a madman or even as deformed cripples. Nevertheless, as much as a father would love a scurvy or crook-backed son, these essays are loved by their spiritual father, a man who, in yet another ironical turn, having had a French education, knows a little about everything and nothing about anything. This introductory metaphor is extended into a description of Montaigne's style. The author admits to sometimes forming borrowed plasterwork ("incrustations empruntées") like the worst of hacks, which has to be stripped off by the reader in the act of reading. He invents metaphors, which have to be dismantled by

²⁰ "Je sens qu'il en est advenu de mesmes. Les plaintes qui me cornent aux oreilles sont comme cela: 'Oisif, froid aux offices d'amitié et de parenté et aux offices publiques; trop particulier'. Les plus injurieux ne disent pas: 'Pourquoi a-il prins? Pourquoi n'a-il payé?' Mais: 'Pourquoy ne quitte il? ne donne il?'" (I 26, 223 c). See also D. Frame, *Montaigne: a Biography*, 25-28.

²¹ Z. Gierczynski, "Le fidéisme apparent de Montaigne et les artifices des 'Essais'", pp. 137-163.

means of a personal (reading) experience; once their original context and intention have been traced, they may be included in a text of the reader's own making. The topic of the essay, that is, teaching the fact that our lives will be mirrors of our discourses, is couched in a metaphor that Montaigne elaborates to one of life as a series of written texts, and, in an elaboration of his preface, into an image of the book that is life itself (168-172): he starts with one of his frequent critiques of "la science de la parlerie". In a personal example he then presents an encounter, which provokes him to distinguish between the 'gentilhomme' and the 'grammarien' / 'logicien'. Instead of eloquence, Montaigne prefers "la verité simple et naïve" (168). A series of examples illustrating useless eloquence is then followed by a tentative conclusion on style: "La force et les nerfs ne s'empruntent point; les atours et le manteau s'emprunte" (I 26, 172 a) ("But you cannot borrow strength or sinews: you can borrow mantles and finery" [194]). This means that although language may clothe - and also disguise - the persona of its user, it nevertheless betrays an author's true personality, who, according to Montaigne's own words, would form a man by the acquaintance of the Muses rather than by the acquaintance of his wife. This man thus formed is a man of action. His writing reflects an active life by discussing matter. Yet, as we have seen, matter must be rendered persuasive by words. Metaphor, therefore, outdoes the example.

Judgment

Metaphors demand an exegesis; they demand to be transferred and applied. To judge is to use an art of application, an ability to subsume something particular to something general, to recognize the exception to a rule. Yet the nature of judgment is not to be explained logically because there is no principle that might guide the application of judgment. A second judgment only can perform this task. Judgment cannot be taught in general, but must be practised from case to case.²² Unlike many humanistic precursors, such as Rudolph Agricola or Pierre de La Ramée, accord-

²² For the German Enlightenment, the faculty of the judgment resembled the faculty of the senses and, accordingly, was not considered as a part of the highest intellectual abilities (H. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 36). R. La Charité (*The Concept of Judgment in Montaigne*) analyzes Montaigne's 'judgement' by contrasting it with 'entendement', 'sens', 'raison', 'conscience' and defines it as an intellectual 'disponibilité', as a form of ignorance that breeds inquisitiveness and objective dialogue.

ing to whom dialectics teaches a lesson in invention and judgment, Montaigne maintains that judgment cannot be taught.

In the course of the interpretation, the text that is to be understood is applied to the present situation of the interpreter. The problem that the author discusses in his two essays on education is how theoretical knowledge of the ethical nature of the human being can be taught. If, for example, man encounters the good in a concrete situation, his ethical knowledge must help him recognize what this situation demands of him. In other words, an agent must see the concrete situation in the light of what is demanded of him in general. Therefore, any general knowledge without reference to a concrete situation is meaningless and even threatens to obscure the particular demands made by this situation. Montaigne presents his own judgment in favoring French education, even though in the full knowledge of its shortcomings and its need for reform, if not necessarily reform according to his own course of education; in not hiding the little mannerism of the great Turnebus; in promoting a curriculum that takes into account the particular situation of a student and his intellectual capacities; in tailoring the curriculum to the movements of the soul and thus considering every moment of the day as part of the program (the world as book); in basing this curriculum on the union of body and soul and on the physiological presentation of the soul as a limb in constant need of training.

Montaigne's Readers

In the following pages I would like to illustrate how far contemporary writers were able to grasp Montaigne's pedagogical intention, that is, to what degree they were 'logophilous' or 'philologous' as he distinguishes, following the Greek philosopher Zenon (I 26, 172 a). "Un suffisant lecteur descouvre souvant ès escrits d'autrui des perfections autres que celles que l'auteur y a mises et aperceües, et y preste des sens et des visages plus riches" (I 24, 175 a) ("A competent reader can often find in another man's writings perfections other than those which the author knows that he put there, and can endow them with richer senses and meanings" [144]). What is a competent reader and what is a good book? According to Montaigne, "un livre suffisant" is a book close to nature or indeed nature itself. It proceeds organically, without first testing its readers' intellectual forces. It teaches in the same way a dancing master would if he were able to instruct his students by having them watch rather than having them admit to their

awkwardness. For poetic leaps (“les saillies poétiques”) are only by-products of writing; they cannot be created intentionally but happen by chance. The grace and beauty to be found in a work of art depends more on the artist’s good fortune of having a competent interpreter than on his own poetic intention.

Competent readers are those who possess certain intellectual and moral qualities. They have a predilection for Seneca, Plutarch, and Ovid. They do not like to study books; they scan them. They prefer to formulate their thoughts while freely moving about, either in the open air or in front of their bookshelves, where they can consult now this book, now that one. Instead of scientific treatises, they produce dreams written in a bouncing style (“à sauts et à gambades”). These writings demand an understanding reader, a friend (“un ami lecteur”).

Three of Montaigne’s contemporaries seem to vie for this honor. In 1585, Estienne Tabourot, a lawyer and ardent Catholic, publishes his *Biggarrures* with four essays adapted from Montaigne. In 1595, Marie de Gournay publishes the first posthumous edition of the *Essais*, to which she attaches a lengthy preface, an encomium as well as an apology. In *De la Sagesse* (published 1601, written 1597-1599) Pierre Charron rewrites Montaigne’s *Essais* in another three volumes which, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, will enjoy more popularity than their model. Whether each of the three authors is a competent reader remains to be seen. But all of them can be regarded as implied readers. What precisely they find in the *Essais* I will analyze on the basis of Wolfgang Iser’s concept of the reading subject as he depicts it in *Der Implizite Leser* as well as his definition of the reading process in *Der Akt des Lesens*.²³

Iser’s reader is not an ideal reader, but a reader who is implied in the text and who brings his own set of experiences and preconceptions to the act of reading. At the same time, it is through his active participation that meaning is referred to a text; the text’s potential meaning is changed according to the reader’s power of discovery. The process of reading and its fixation through writing constitute the literary work which is situated halfway between text and work, between the artistic pole and the aesthetic one. The dialectic of reading, according to Iser, consists in discovering one’s personal ability to formulate a deciphering capacity. This concretization through text brings to light the subject-matter of the textual object.

²³ M. McKinley mentions Iser in her conclusion to *Words in a Corner*.

Estienne Tabourot

Estienne Tabourot is generally seen as a late representative of the rhetoricians. In his *Bigarrures* he collected the fashionable wordplays of his day and preserved them in a systematic way as a monument to a literary movement already in its decline. His four “serious essays” in the tone of Montaigne propose first to teach children how to write before they know how to read (IV 1), then engage in a critique of false nobility (IV 2), subsequently develop a rhetoric that distinguishes between masculine, feminine, and virgin rhymes (IV 3), and finally discuss magic and imposture (IV 4). Tabourot’s essay “Quelques traits utiles pour l’institution des enfants” (IV 1), as well as Montaigne’s “De l’institution des enfans”, criticize contemporary education and scholastic methodology. Both are dedicated to noblewomen concerned with the upbringing of their children. Tabourot’s essay, however, parodies many features of Montaigne’s style and criticizes the humanist’s pedagogy as unnatural and elitist.²⁴

Tabourot’s parodic intention, a “critical refunctioning of preformed literary material with comic effect”,²⁵ is clear from the very beginning of the fourth book. At the same time he emphasizes the seriousness of his undertaking: “Toutesfois, ce que j’en ai fait a esté principalement afin de faire entendre, par les discours de ce livre, que j’ay l’esprit disposé à autres choses qu’à des lascivetez, pour former la bouche à un tas de calomniateurs ignorans qui me l’ont malignement objecté” (4) (“In any case, what I did was mainly to explain in the essays of this book that I am interested in other things than lasciviousness, to correct some slanderers who have maliciously accused me of it”); and he continues “Car tout en me jouant, j’apprens aux plus grossiers, par ridicules et grossiers discours, des figures de rhétorique, lesquelles s’apprennent quelquefois es escholes par les régens à grands coups de fouet. Mon premier livre, qu’est-ce autre chose qu’une partie d’une grammaire plaisante?” (5) (“For while playing, I teach even to the dullest, by mocking and coarse speeches, some rhetorical figures which are sometimes taught in schools by the masters by means of heavy whiplashes. What is my first book but part of a pleasant grammar?”). Book four is intended to win over the serious-minded, such as Montaigne, who is classed among non-figurative writers.

²⁴ This does not exclude Tabourot’s appreciation of Montaigne, as we can see from a little poem that he wrote in the author’s honor and that is listed by O. Millet in *La première réception des Essais de Montaigne*, 62.

²⁵ M. A. Rose, *Parody/Meta-Fiction*, 35.

The introductory scene of the essay IV 1 shows a group of children in the bucolic setting of a country home, who, in a spelling competition, are vying for the fruit and the favor of the noblewoman Charlotte Noblet, to whom Tabourot dedicates the essay. Among the children is a little boy who comes away empty-handed because he only knows the first four letters of the alphabet. Soon, however, it is discovered that he knows how to write them, while none of the others do. After some initial dispute with the lady (“*Sur quoy depuis vous pristez occasion de blâmer la façon de l’institution de cet enfant, que l’on mettait à l’écriture avant qu’il eust la cognoissance des élémens et de la valeur d’iceux*” [10]; “Following which you took the occasion to criticize the manner of teaching this child, who was put to write before he had knowledge of the elements and of their value”) and several days of thorough deliberation on his own in the fashion of Montaigne, the narrator thinks well to inform his noble patroness why it would be advantageous to begin the formal instruction of young boys by writing. This passage is quite obviously an ironic comment on Montaigne’s learning Latin before French, a development that he describes with so much gratitude to his father in the essay on education.

In a hyperbolic elaboration of a favorite humanist metaphor, that of teaching as a form of agriculture (a metaphor also used by Montaigne to describe the care to be taken with the child’s mind), Tabourot pedantically follows every intellectual movement of a child who is learning how to read. Since all learning processes are based on recognition, he explains in a facetious argument, reading texts, even highly difficult ones, will also be based on the simple skill of recognizing A, B, C, D. By using letters as a mnemonic device a child could learn how to read in a shorter period of time and with much less work. This is clearly an allusion to Montaigne’s recommendation to learn Latin without any work (“*sans travail*”) through the method used by his father. According to Tabourot, however, this method is unnatural and above all impracticable for those who are not socially part of “*les grands seigneurs*”. Montaigne’s advice that no corporal punishment be used is imitated in a new context by Tabourot, who reminds mothers and governesses not to scold in case the zealous pupil should cover his clothes with ink. Then follows a critique of contemporary scholastic education which consists of the memorization of long lists of abbreviations. It is satirized by Tabourot’s own alphabetical list of moral terms to be given to the student, who is encouraged to add synonyms and antonyms. The informed reader can again decode this passage as a comment on Montaigne’s moral world. The essay ends with praise of the

Jesuit's pedagogic use of competitive disputes, such as those presented at the beginning of the essay.

In this text Tabourot imitates his well-known contemporary's weighty and redundant style in his address to the lady. He casts Montaignean expressions into an environment that is much less thoughtful than the one Montaigne is accustomed to and writes for an audience that is much less appreciative of humanist benevolence, suitable teaching methods, and manners of living. Having first decoded the *Essais* and then offered them in encoded form to the reader, he can unmask them as heavily and ideally moralistic, as the dreams of an unworldly nobleman aspiring to make his own exceptional situation into a pedagogic rule.

Pierre Charron

Pierre Charron's *De la Sagesse* begins with an "Exhortation à s'estudier et se cognoistre". The title of this first chapter already describes the author's position: on the one hand, it clearly points to Charron's debt to Montaigne; on the other hand, it underlines his explicit moral purpose of promoting self-study, which will allow the willing reader to overcome the constraints of public opinion and the attacks of passion. The wise man thus conceived is the ideal "preud'homme" who is in full possession of his freedom of mind ("liberté d'esprit"), that is, exercise of judgment, stoic indifference, universalism. Together with God and nature, the concept of "preud'homme" forms the trinity of the dawning age of rationalism. For Charron, man is fundamentally good and only has to be directed to the right path to virtue, which he can then safely be left to follow on his own. Virtue is to be taught on the basis of Montaigne's texts. This is the reason why, with very few exceptions,²⁶ Charron has been refused the title of original thinker and instead has been stamped as a plagiarist. If he intended to preserve Montaigne's heritage for the age to come, he did a bad job in that he reduced the vivid texts to Sunday school lessons. If, on the other hand, he meant to write an original work, he failed on account of the numerous passages that are simply copied word for word from the *Essais*. A solution to the problem of Charron's originality can be found in the fact that the emerging age of devotion ("renouveau religieux")²⁷ has no room

²⁶ F. Kaye, *Charron et Montaigne. Du plagiat à l'originalité*, J. D. Charron, "Did Charron plagiarize Montaigne".

²⁷ The literature of devotion is represented by P. Coton, *Intérieure occupation d'une âme dévote*; F. de Sales, *Introduction à la vie dévote*; P. Binet, *Dévotion et réjouissance*

any longer for the humanist combination of pagan and Christian motives. Religious writers have the choice to either integrate ancient ethical ideas in a Christian framework or to eliminate those ideas that are regarded as incompatible with dogma. Ethics must be independent of religion as well as of the pagan traits found in the *Essais*. Since Montaigne, according to the new age, is the prototype of the humanist pagan, all of his personal allusions must be removed from Charron's text, because the "preud'homme" is a purely practical and pragmatic ideal.

Montaigne's essay "De l'amitié" (I 28), framed by the portrait of La Boétie which is reduced to a mere portrait of the frame in the course of the essay, describes in detail several kinds of relationships, most of them derived from personal experience. Charron's "De l'amour ou amitié" (III 7), like all his essays, is preceded by a schematic summary and a list of the examples he will quote. It starts with a precise definition of friendship that is followed by a systematic enumeration of possible relationships, their causes, the rank or status of the people involved, and the force and intention of their sentiments. The category of the perfect friendship is illustrated with the example of Montaigne's friendship with La Boétie.

Although the verbal texture thus obtained reads very well - it is, for example, free from the citations found in Montaigne's text -, writing for Charron obviously is not the creative process that Montaigne considers it to be. Charron's essay is devoid of the personal and aesthetic features that make moralistic literature worth reading, at least for the modern reader. Moreover, the exceptional friendship depicted in the *Essais* takes on a normative hue. On the one hand, Charron might be accused of insensitive reading. On the other hand, he captures the spirit of the new age: its idea of progress demands that past experience be collected, arranged in good style and order, and used as bricks in the moral building of the present.

Marie de Gournay

Having discussed Tabourot's parody and Charron's imitation with the help of Wolfgang Iser's concept of the implied reader, I will now analyze Marie de Gournay's *Préface* on the basis of Iser's *Der Akt des Lesens*. This theory is a phenomenology of reading: in the same way that sheet

en Dieu, Dévotion des malades. These authors give practical instruction to prayer and good deeds, and favor mysticism and a return of superstitious practices. They prepare the growing influence of the Jansenists and their preference for generalities and universal statements.

music is in need of interpretation by the musician, the text is in need of actualization by the reader. It is transferred into the reader's consciousness in an initial registration or recording process followed by assimilation or digestion. In her preface Marie de Gournay describes both her first acquaintance with the *Essais* and the overwhelming influence they had on her. She depicts the process of assimilation to the point where she can defend Montaigne's text as if it were her own, justifying his use of Latin, his alleged disregard of literary norms, rejection of structure, praise of heretical authors, obscurity, and his extensive self-portrayal.

According to Iser, the act of reading is a decoding process that happens in chunks. The textual world is a coherence of intentional sentence correlates, in which each sentence serves as a model for the following one. The movement from one to the next initiates the formation of the textual subject as a correlate of consciousness. The reader is suspended between protention and retention. Marie de Gournay organizes the sequence of sentences while continually opening new horizons inherent in the text. The individual moments of this act of reading represent changes in her viewpoint. They appear as textual perspectives differing from the articulation of the reading process itself. This double movement corresponds to Marie de Gournay's characterization of the *Essais*: on the one hand, they are sources of information; on the other hand, they help her develop a critical sense that will permit her to turn Montaigne's arguments into a passionate plea for the education of women.

In the act of reading, the subject attempts to follow every movement of the reading process. Her perspectival situating of the oscillating viewpoint in metaphysical terms corresponds to a continual modification of the present moment. Although not every new moment can be experienced in isolation, each occurs as retentional modification. Verbal texture is created by the reader's grouping of signs that brings about identification through their own representation as forms. The conflict between the reader's observation and her bias constitutes the event of the text. Marie de Gournay's preface is text and meta-text: the author describes the formation of her judgment through reading, then proves her judgment in an exhortation to the reader, and acknowledges this exhortation as a digression in the humanist fashion. In the dialectic of reading, textual experience becomes personal experience which is again transcended through aesthetic experience: the controlled observation of the text's demands creates the possibility of forming references for what has been internalized in the very process of internalization.

This artificial doubling of the reader is described by Iser as “constitution of the reading subject”. The dichotomy between object and subject that is necessary for perception and recognition to happen is transferred into the reader’s mind. The reader is engaged by the author’s thoughts, temporarily thinking them instead of her own. Thus, a horizon is formed in her consciousness which emerges as a new horizon for a new text. Each text is, therefore, a system of combinations with a place for the person who is able to realize its particular combination. The reader has to fill “intentional blanks”, that is, omitted connections in need of concretization or simply polysemous words. Out of a list of Montaigne’s favorite concepts, such as ‘jugement’, ‘entendement’, ‘intelligence’, “belle âme”, the blank that Marie de Gournay decodes in her preface is the concept of competence (‘suffisance’). It is used by Montaigne to describe men’s competence in all fields of life and is denied women. Marie de Gournay’s defence of the *Essais* against the followers of Malherbe, her point by point refutation of contemporary criticisms, is an art of reading by which she holds up a new genre and its implied reader: this implied reader is Gournay herself, “une belle âme” and “un grand esprit” despite her being a woman, a reader who is willing to continue a personalized discussion of the topics dear to Montaigne.²⁸

A competent reader often sees perfections in a text that have not been discovered by the author: Pierre Charron rewrites the *Essais* as a steadily unfolding text, to be sure, but does not engage in a dialogue, let alone fill “intentional blanks”. He omits polysemous terms and ambiguous expressions in order to replace them with transparent concepts. His method may best be described as reductive imitation. In a similarly oversimplified way, Estienne Tabourot writes a meta-text that parodies the attitude and tone of a moralist. Here it might also be argued that both Tabourot and Charron succeed in escaping the seduction of Montaigne’s writing, of the friendship that is proposed by Montaigne; this friendship must remain an illusion if the diligent and competent reader falls into the trap of succumbing to Montaigne’s attitudes, opinions, and overwhelmingly agreeable personality, that is, to his subtle and almost imperceptible elenctic which I have presented in chapter one. In his rendering of the essay, Charron does not end up by becoming Montaigne’s “friend” on a textual level, nor does Tabourot in his encoded version. However, I would still maintain that it remains for Marie de Gournay to be an implied reader, the competent

²⁸ See in particular G. Dotoli (“Montaigne et les libertins via Mlle de Gournay”) who points to her judicious discussion of Montaigne’s language and religious attitude.

reader who engages in a genuine discussion with Montaigne's text, while at the same time proving her critical sense, and to perform an act of reading that combines knowledge of the author's personality, intimate acquaintance with his work, and interpretative sensitivity. She embodies the student who proves to have judgment, thus fully realizing Montaigne's pedagogical aim.

Friedrich Nietzsche, a Modern Implied Reader

It is the relationship between metaphor and example, between *res* and *verba* that is staged in Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra*. This text is inherently metaphorical and the content of Zarathustra's teaching is both masked and revealed by the images, so that it remains a secret to the end of the book.²⁹ Zarathustra's instruction by means of metaphor is attractive and challenging as well as dismissive and frustrating, because it prevents the reader from finding precise interpretations. Although the work begins in part one with a definition of teaching as gift-giving virtue, Zarathustra's words in the course of the following books become "silent speech" (II 1, 20, 22; III 3, 6, 9). In this speech the fascination of metaphor outdoes the exemplarity of the figure of the prophet, who becomes himself a metaphor to be decoded by the student and reader.

In the preface, Zarathustra presents himself not only as philosopher, psychologist, and antichrist, but also as poet, prophet, moralist, dancer, child, musician, and, above all, as an extraordinary pedagogue who teaches transformation, metamorphosis, and the use of masks. In the same way that the sun has to sink in order to offer its abundant warmth to the human being, Zarathustra, in the guise of the prophet, has to descend from the mountains in order to bestow his immense knowledge onto man. The gist of Zarathustra's teaching, if it can be defined, is that he embodies the untimely example of the 'Übermensch', who does not yet exist as a species, but who, in the figure of Zarathustra himself, provides a stepping stone for possible overmen to come. It is important to remember here that the intended reading of what has been rendered by 'superman' falsifies what in a creative use of the German language means "the human being of the day after tomorrow". Nietzsche's extended metaphor describes the pedagogue as a tightrope walker who establishes as well as embodies a

²⁹ In Nietzsche's correspondence from 1883 and 1884 this text is described as either a sermon or poetry.

rope between animal and 'Übermensch' (16). He represents a bridge and not a purpose, a transfer ('Übergang'), a sunset ('Untergang'), "Ein gefährliches Hinüber, ein gefährliches Auf-dem-Wege, ein gefährliches Zurückblicken, ein gefährliches Schaudern und Stehenbleiben" (KSA 4, 16) ("A dangerous across, a dangerous on-the-way, a dangerous looking-back, a dangerous shuddering and stopping"), a passage crossing an abyss. This 'Übermensch' is defined as the meaning of the earth ("Sinn der Erde"). In Zarathustra's language, he is the one who remains faithful to the soil, the body, the here and now, to life in the present instead of in the beyond.

The metaphor of the tightrope walker and the manner of its elaboration illustrate Nietzsche's way of composing images from the residues of metaphors which he reawakens to new meaning and to modified use. This is done through a contrast of the literal and the metaphorical meaning, which is pursued to its extreme, that is, to the death of the literal meaning. The tightrope symbolizes the extraordinarily narrow path on which development is possible at all, which is illustrated in a series of parallelisms that serve to vary the image in order to arrive at the conclusion: the tightrope walker is a "prophet of lightning". The passage performs the multiple transfers that one single metaphor facilitates in Nietzsche's process of staging it. At the same time, it unfolds the presuppositions that are at the root of the image. The author calls this writing with blood, that is, with spirit, 'esprit', 'Geist'.

Zarathustra experiences an awakening and has to acknowledge that he cannot teach his secrets to his disciples, but must from now on be content with teaching only himself. Thus he may teach the attentive among his disciples to follow him in their own way. A glance at the third of Nietzsche's unfashionable observations reveals the sources of this body of thought. Schopenhauer, the Montaigne of the nineteenth century, is here depicted as the ideal pedagogue;³⁰ he teaches a concept of culture that involves, above all, a development of the self into an independently judging human being, who will be strong enough to remove the veneer of custom,

³⁰ "Ich weiss nur noch einen Schriftsteller, den ich in Betreff der Ehrlichkeit Schopenhauer gleich, ja noch höher stelle: das ist Montaigne. Dass ein solcher Mensch geschrieben hat, dadurch ist wahrlich die Lust auf dieser Erde zu leben vermehrt worden. Mir wenigstens geht es seit dem Bekanntwerden mit dieser freiesten und kräftigsten Seele so, dass ich sagen muss, was er von Plutarch sagt: "kaum habe ich einen Blick auf ihn geworfen, so ist mir ein Bein oder ein Flügel gewachsen". Mit ihm würde ich es halten, wenn die Aufgabe gestellt wäre, es sich auf der Erde heimisch zu machen" (KSA 1, 348).

to counteract the herd-mentality of his time, and to contribute to an educational reform.

CHAPTER FOUR

INTERPRETING MONTAIGNE'S POLITICAL TEXTS

Die stillsten Worte sind es, welche den Sturm bringen. Gedanken, die mit Taubenfüßen kommen, lenken die Welt (Also sprach Zarathustra, *KS4* 4, 189).

It is the stillest words that bring on the storm. Thoughts that come on doves' feet guide the world.

In the economic, philosophical, religious, and political crisis of the sixteenth century in France emerges a particular kind of political thinking that inherits the intellectual and political achievements of the early humanists. Aristotle's and Augustine's writings, Roman law, and feudalism are superseded by the concept of monarchy, the rise of a bourgeoisie, and the new idea of a French nation state. Montaigne's withdrawal to privacy in the middle of the Religious Wars of the second half of the century¹ is indicative of a general reaction to the French kings' attempts to centralize the nation and of the nobility's increasing endeavor to protect their private sphere during a movement of penitential Counter-Reform and increasing religious fanaticism. At first, the League and the Counter-Reformation initiated by Henri III go hand in hand. Later, however, the Catholics of the League become distrustful of Henri's too tolerant attitude toward the heretic King of Navarre and the heretic Queen of England and separate themselves from the purely royalist Catholics. The increasing power of the League forces Henri to employ the tactic of dissimulation and to embrace this time the Leaguers. The situation culminates in 1588, when he issues the Edict of Union, at a moment when Paris is in the hand of the Guises and he himself at Chartres. The edict announces the annihilation of all heresy and demands of all subjects to join in the war and to never obey a heretic king. The Protestants are banned from public offices, political assemblies are prohibited, and measures are taken against all those individuals and towns that refuse to sign the edict.

¹ In the spring 1571, as Montaigne lays down in the Latin inscription of his library.

In his *Essais*, Montaigne endeavors to create a reign of the individual on the basis of reasonable discourse, a discourse consciously opposed to the late Calvinist exaggerations. Yet this independent self intends to survive in a political atmosphere where success is predicated to a large extent on Machiavellian dissimulation, as it becomes evident in the course of the unsuccessful rebellion of the Huguenots, who openly advertised their religious and political goals. Montaigne's "reasonable dissimulation" is a discourse that can be reconciled with the advocacy of individual autonomy and honesty. Yet the survival of the new notion of the autonomous individual in the political state is ensured only in a position of compromise, that is, by cautious or masked insubordination.² That Montaigne is much less conservative than is usually thought should not only be obvious to a few.³ Montaigne's position represents an assertion of the individual and,

² Critical literature therefore has tried to track Montaigne down, mostly unsuccessfully. L. Strauss, in *Persecution and the Art of Writing* uses two different concepts to describe the discrepancy between an author's depiction of his private persona in his work and his public function: intentional blunders are characteristic of such writing between the lines and the forbidden fruit can only be recognized by the intelligent and trustworthy reader. Strauss presupposes that only thoughtful men are careful readers and that thoughtful men are trustworthy (knowledge as virtue).

A very convincing attempt to define humanistic strategies of writing is V. Kahn's *Rhetoric, Prudence, and Skepticism in the Renaissance*. According to Kahn, Montaigne's rhetoric of skepticism is consciously opposed to the official contemporary rhetoric of consensus, but, because of its continuous exercise of the judgment (the weighing of contrasting opinions), it takes the shape of a rhetoric of prudence. Judgment is grounded in the individual's sense of taste, which becomes natural authority. Montaigne, in Kahn's interpretation, thus figures as a secularization of Luther (139).

P. Henry's *Montaigne in Dialogue* depicts the *Essais* as a permanent discussion with the purpose of self-cultivation. Dialogue is both a way of finding truth and of concealing it. Henry maintains that Montaigne develops a method of "defensive writing", using, for example, facade titles and precautionary prefaces in order to protect himself not only against censorship, but in general and from the very beginning of his literary enterprise, against possible critics.

J. M. Archer starts his book *Sovereignty and Intelligence* with an introductory chapter on Montaigne, who figures as the model courtier and diplomat. His task is to contribute to the sovereign's intelligence or knowledge within a Foucauldian courtly panopticon. It is the counselor Montaigne who delineates in his essays how one can monitor the king and how one can take sides and remain virtually neutral at the same time in the midst of civil conflicts.

³ C. Sarolea (*German Problems and Personalities*) is one of the few to see Montaigne as a rebellious writer. Whether Montaigne was a liberal or a conservative thinker has always been a point of heated discussion. Admittedly, the question of the author's political affiliations is one of the most fascinating problems that can be examined in any analysis of the *Essais*. First, because we know with a fair amount of certainty the extent of Montaigne's public tasks as a jurist and a mayor of Bordeaux (D. Frame, *Montaigne*:

a *Biography*; R. Trinquet, *La jeunesse de Montaigne: ses origines familiales, son enfance et ses études*; A. Gruen, *La vie publique de Montaigne*) and second, because we can see from details in the *Essais* how thoroughly Montaigne was acquainted with contemporary historical events; proof for his excellent knowledge of contemporary affairs can be found in his mention of the events in and around Bordeaux and near the castle of Montaigne (miracles, processes). G. Nakam (*Montaigne et son temps*), M. Smith (*Montaigne and Religious Freedom*), and recently G. Hoffmann (*Montaigne's Career*) provide many details. However, Montaigne explicitly says in the preface that his book is intended for private use only: "C'est icy un livre de bonne foy, lecteur. Il t'avertit dès l'entrée, que je ne m'y suis proposé aucune fin, que domestique et privée". In another place he comments on the danger of writing about contemporary events: "Je tiens moins hazardeux d'escire les choses passées que presentes; d'autant que l'escrivain n'a à rendre compte que d'une verité empruntée" (I 21, 152 c). Therefore the *Essais* avoid, as it would seem, any direct reference to the writer's political opinion.

The modern discussion about Montaigne's political affiliations can be said to begin with P. Villey and A. Armaingaud. The latter, in his essay "La politique de Montaigne", sees the author Montaigne as both a traditionalist and a revolutionary, with a political attitude that from the very beginning aims at establishing Henri de Navarre on the French throne. M. Citoleux, *Le vrai Montaigne théologien et soldat* portrays the author as a miles christianus. F. S. Brown's *Religious and Political Conservatism in the Essais of Montaigne* is part of the conservative camp in that it continues Villey's line and emphasizes the author's separation between public and private life, politics and religious faith, and his pursuit of publicly prudent action, even though she regards the *Essais* themselves as the diary of a fundamentally liberal and enlightened thinker, whose primary concern is human betterment and moral improvement. A more democratic view of Montaigne's political opinion is proffered by D. Frame in *Montaigne's Discovery of Man*. H. Friedrich's *Montaigne* continues the split between private radicalism and public conservatism, theory and practice, between, as some might say, extreme individualism and accommodation. J. Boon, *Montaigne gentilhomme et essayiste* describes the relationship between the noble d'épée and Montaigne the writer. J. Starobinski's *Montaigne en mouvement* interprets and reinterprets the sentence which he considers to be Montaigne's political maxim: "conserver et durer". This is made possible by an intellectual fusion of opposites in infinite mutability and recommencement, which expresses itself in the text as circular movements and in life as trusting obedience to the permanent political change. A middle course is pursued by J. Supple in *Arms versus Letters*; Supple sees the military virtues as balanced by the literary ones: Montaigne condemns, for example, both Protestants and Catholics for creating conflicts for the sheer pleasure of it. In his *Montaigne and Religious Freedom* M. Smith analyzes Montaigne's paradoxical resistance to political and religious tolerance, while his *Montaigne and the Roman Censors* presents the writer's independence of mind. D. L. Schaefer, in *The Political Philosophy of Montaigne*, depicts Montaigne as the forerunner of capitalist market theory whose work presents a coherent political philosophy. In the last chapter of his book *Montaigne's Career*, G. Hoffmann outlines the political dimension Montaigne's *Essais* may have had as well as their potential role in the writer's diplomatic ambitions.

more precisely, points to that of the later freethinkers.⁴ Many passages of the *Essais*, for example, criticize the naïve acceptance of the “consensus omnium” as evidence of the integrity of reason and morality. In Montaigne’s case, the free spirit, the one who has liberated himself from the weight of intellectual and spatial constraints (Montaigne likes the distance of his castle to the court at Paris), voluntarily returns to a form of dissimulation, while publishing his criticism of the times. Thus, he provokes or actively promotes an interpretation of his “ stillest words”, which allegedly are only written for a small number of people.⁵ In his essay on the praise of solitude, for example, Montaigne recommends: “Il faut faire comme les animaux qui effacent la trace à la porte de leur taniere” (I 39, 242 a) (“We must do like the beasts and scuff out our tracks at the entrance to our lairs” [277]); the act of reading must then uncover the tracks which the author has covered over for reasons of security.⁶

⁴ His permanent emphasis on individuality is important, because it shows that he does not support what later will be called “raison d’état” (it demands the subordination of conscience to the demands of public welfare).

⁵ “J’escris mon livre à peu d’hommes et à peu d’années” (III 9, 960 b).

⁶ “Joint qu’à l’aventure ay-je quelque obligation particuliere à ne dire qu’à demy, à dire confusément, à dire discordamment” (III 9, 974 c). “Des coches” (III 6), for example, is an essay, that has always challenged interpreters. It describes the thoughts of a traveller riding in a coach. In the first half of the essay, Montaigne harshly criticizes European imperialism exemplified in the Spanish conquests that were undertaken in the name of the Church. The historical example serves as a means to implicitly condemn the French civil wars: after some skeptical remarks with regard to the limited scope of human knowledge, on the basis of which, however, heretics are being burnt by the thousand in Europe, Montaigne completely rejects Western knowledge in his contrastive presentation of a highly civilized primitive culture that serves to highlight the barbaric traits of his own. The second half of the essay starts with a description of Montaigne’s nausea during a coach ride. This nausea is not caused by fear, as Montaigne emphasizes. As in a real coach-ride, Montaigne starts to divert his thoughts away from what causes the nausea and muses instead about war-coaches, royal equipment, expenditure, and finally Cyrus, the spendthrift king, who is an example of an emperor who ruined his country. It is excess that necessitates wars and it is the excess of the European kings that has necessitated the conquests. Montaigne’s example is Catherine de Médicis of whose lavish reign he is cautiously critical. The recent “discoveries” are then contrasted with a Utopian scenario of a truly humanist conquest that would have gently polished the inhabitants of the new world. The essay closes with examples of diplomatic skills, sensitivity, and understanding that are all found in the new world and that are then contrasted with the bestial brutality of the Spaniards.

Machiavellian Dissimulation and Montaignean Individuality

It is generally accepted that the most important theoretician for Renaissance politics of the sixteenth century is Machiavelli. The Machiavellian politician teaches how to use the opinions and whims of the masses and the powerful toward some practical advantage. Against Machiavelli is posited Innocent Gentillet's *Anti-Machiavell*.⁷ A confrontation of these two figures permits dialogue and argument on both sides of the question, and thus trains and educates politicians' prudential judgment. For many humanistic kings and their political counsellors, the choice between Machiavelli and Gentillet is the only choice available. Montaigne is relatively silent on Machiavelli and in the *Essais* mentions him by name only twice. Both passages, in a certain sense, downplay his influence. The context of the first passage is one of Montaigne's many presentations of his own judgment: in order to form his personal opinion, Montaigne first follows somebody else's expertise ("Ainsi, je ne suis propre qu'à suivre, et me laisse aisément emporter à la foule" [II 17, 638 a]; "And so I am fitted only for following, and easily allow myself to be persuaded by the crowd" [743]). Imitation is one of the Machiavellian ruses; yet it is Machiavelli's strength to use crowd opinion, whereas for Montaigne to submit to it, is a weakness. Nevertheless, continues Montaigne, every opinion can be refuted, every choice criticized: "Les discours de Machiavel, pour exemple, estoient assez solides pour le subject; si, y a-il eu grand aisance à les combattre; et ceux qui l'ont fait, n'ont pas laissé moins de facilité à combattre les leurs" (II 17, 638 a) ("The discourses of Machiavelli, for example, were solid enough, given their subject, yet it was extremely easy to attack them; and those who have done so left it just as easy to attack theirs too" [744]). Consequently, Gentillet's *Anti-Machiavell* is hardly more convincing. Moreover, Machiavelli falls completely short of Caesar, as Montaigne maintains in another essay: "et dit-on de ce temps, que Machiavel est encores ailleurs en credit; mais le feu Mareschal Strossy, qui avoit pris Caesar pour sa part, avoit sans doute bien mieux choisi:" (II 34, 713 a) ("And it is said that in these our days there are others who still think highly of Machiavelli, though the late Marshall Strozzi who took Caesar for his book had without any doubt made the much better choice" [833]). The favorite politician of Catherine de Médicis, who was said to

⁷ *Discours sur les moyens de bien gouverner et maintenir en bonne paix un royaume ou autre principauté...contre Nicholas Machiavel*, 1576; a Latin version appeared in 1571. With regard to the role of Machiavelli in the sixteenth century see D. R. Kelley's article "Murderous Machiavel in France: A Post Mortem".

have brought her children up on him, is here unfavorably compared to a better strategist.

In Montaigne's view, then, France is suffering from a general loss of honesty, in the private as well as in the public domain. Contrary to the cannibals, for example, in whose Utopian government there do not even exist the words that express dishonesty (I 31, 204 a), dissimulation has perverted what might be called the French national character:

Car, quant à cette nouvelle vertu de faintise et de dissimulation qui est à cette heure si fort en credit, je la hay capitallement; et, de tous les vices, je n'en trouve aucun qui tesmoigne tant de lâcheté et bassesse de cœur. C'est un'humeur couarde et servile de s'aller desguiser et cacher sous un masque, et de n'oser se faire veoir tel qu'on est (II 17, 630 a).

As for that novel virtue of deceit and dissimulation that is now much honored I hate it unto death, and among all the vices I can find none which bears better testimony to cowardice and to baseness of mind. It is an abject and slave-like humour to go disguising and hiding yourself behind a mask and not to dare to let yourself be seen as you are (735).

The French have come to consider dishonesty, pretence, and disguise as virtues: "Qui voudroit encherir sur ce tesmoignage, il pourroit dire que ce leur est à present vertu. On s'y forme, on s'y façonne, comme à un exercice d'honneur; car la dissimulation est des plus notables qualitez de ce siecle" (II 18, 649 a) ("If you wanted to outbid that testimony you could say that at the present time it is for them a virtue. People train themselves for it and practise for it as for some honoured pursuit: dissimulation is one of the most striking characteristics of our age" [756]). Precisely for this reason Montaigne has resolved to be different: "Or, de moy, j'ayme mieux estre importun et indiscret que flateur et dissimulé. J'advoue qu'il se peut mesler quelque pointe de fierté et d'opiniastreté à se tenir ainsin entier et decouvert sans consideration d'autrui" (II 17, 632 a) ("Now, as for me, I prefer to be awkward and indiscreet rather than to flatter and dissemble. I confess that there is an element of pride and stubbornness in remaining open and all of a piece, with no consideration for others" [737]). This, however, is not always to his honor: "Tout ce mien proceder est un peu bien dissonant à nos formes; ce ne seroit pas pour produire grands effets, ny pour y durer; l'innocence mesme ne sçauroit ny negotier entre nous sans dissimulation, ny marchander sans manerie" (III 1, 772 b) ("This way of mine of proceeding jars a bit with our customs; it is not made to achieve great effects nor to endure very long. Innocence herself could not

have commerce among us without deception, nor do her business without lying" [897]). Unlike his contemporaries, who "parlent tousjours avec dissimulation en presence les uns des autres" (III 8, 902 c) ("always dissembling when talking in each other's presence" [1047]), Montaigne takes such pleasure at making himself known and at being judged that he would rather betray too much than try to hide anything. According to him, it is not Machiavelli who will furnish the solution to the political problems.

Against Machiavellian dissimulation Montaigne posits honesty, in particular, honesty to one's own self. The self and personal opinion, according to the author, should provide the basis for every political interaction. Yet Montaigne regards the self as a slowly evolving being;⁸ accordingly, his own personality already comprises an unstable as well as a stable component at the least. Therefore, with regard to politics, Montaigne's maxim "to remain open and all of a piece, with no consideration for others" is an unworkable approach and remains fraught with compromise.⁹ Instead of providing a serviceable political theory, I suggest, this approach constitutes much rather the beginnings of what will develop into a Nietzschean ideal of individuality.

It is possible to see Montaigne at the beginning of a long development that evolves out of the assertion of the individual by means of undogmatic thinking, the rejection of *sensus communis* and innate moral ideas, to freethinking or 'libertinisme' in the sense of striving for freedom or of a juridical act of liberation, and finally, to a continuous passage or progress

⁸ J. Starobinski (*Montaigne en mouvement*) is only one of many interpreters to underline this fact. One quote may serve to illustrate Montaigne's view of the self: "Moy à cette heure et tantost, sommes bien deux" (III 9, 941 c).

⁹ Montaigne foregrounds the problem of honesty in several essays that illustrate precarious situations during the civil wars as well as his manner of judging his opponents. "De la conscience" (II 5) describes the impossibility to dissimulate, to hide the truth from one's innermost authority, that is, conscience. "Aussi, à mesme qu'on prend le plaisir au vice, il s'engendre un desplaisir contraire en la conscience, qui nous tourmente de plusieurs imaginations penibles, veillans et dormans" (347). Montaigne's example is an encounter on horseback with a gentleman who pretends to be on his side, wears a cross on his coat, and whose fear underneath the disguise Montaigne immediately senses without knowing that the man is dissimulating. This provokes a comment on the perversion of social interaction during war: "et le pis de ces guerres, c'est que les cartes sont si meslées, votre ennemy n'estant distingué d'avec vous de aucune marque apparente, ny de langage, ny de port, nourry en mesmes loix, meurs et mesme air, qu'il est mal-aisé d'y eviter confusion et desordre" (346). The second part of the essay is a plea against torture, based on the first instance that illustrates how bad conscience is sufficient torture for the perpetrator. Therefore, the torture applied by the law is caused by ignorant doubt in the torturers and also defies its own purpose, because it anticipates the penalty.

of thought throughout literary history, that culminates in the materialism and atheism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This connection can be strengthened even more by considering the libertines of the seventeenth century as heirs of humanistic satire.¹⁰ In order to support this claim, we should remember that Montaigne's texts survive in Pierre Charron, whose purged, systematized, and generalized version of the *Essais*, *De la Sagesse*, was acknowledged by both rationalists and libertines alike in the seventeenth century. Always taking into account the various meanings that 'libertinisme' can assume, a libertine strand can nevertheless be established from Montaigne, La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère, Voltaire, Diderot, Madame de Staël, Sainte-Beuve, Stendhal, to Nietzsche.¹¹ Nietzsche's *Menschliches. Allzumenschliches* is dedicated to Voltaire, to the citizen who has freed himself from any dependence on commonplaces, customs, morality, conventions, religion, and who only acknowledges civic laws.

Nietzsche's Concept of Individuality

The freethinker or free spirit, as Nietzsche would say,¹² stands out from his contemporaries. His ideas differ from those that one should expect him to have on the grounds of his origin, environment, social standing and function, or the general ideas of the age (*KSA* 2, 189). Contrary to the unfree spirit, whose guiding principle in life is habit and who uncritically accepts generalities for truth, the freethinker, in order to be convinced of a matter, requires reasons and rejects his counterpart's blinkered view that goes hand-in-hand with righteousness and a love for purely energetic action. Having recognized the low value of contemporary conventions, the free spirit resolves to distance himself from them in a long struggle.¹³ (For this reason he must be regarded as a genius.) The process of the genius' intellectual disengagement is triggered by his feeling of being imprisoned, which then arouses his desire to free himself as if he were trying to find a new path out of a forest (*KSA* 2, 193, 194). Like the mental move that is

¹⁰ L. Godard de Donville, *Le libertin des origines à 1665*, 11; R. Pintard, *Le libertinage érudit dans la première moitié du XVII^e siècle*.

¹¹ These authors may be considered as Nietzschean immoralists, because they depict contemporary morality in an inverted mirror, that is, 'extra-morally'.

¹² Nietzsche distinguishes between the philosopher of the future, "libre penseur", "libero pensatore", and "Freidenker" (*JGB* II 44).

¹³ This struggle is depicted in the prefaces to Nietzsche's works that describe symptoms and stages of convalescence.

Nietzsche's leitmotif in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches I*, wealth here originates once again from lack, a positive end from a negative beginning. That is why the ideal state, which aims at guaranteeing a good and comfortable life for a great number of people, would not bring to fruition the genius' powerful intellect.

In his own critique of *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, which we find in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche redefines the freethinker as a spirit who has become free, who has once again taken possession of himself.¹⁴ The free spirit par excellence is the one who is not in need of religion nor of metaphysics nor of a general leading idea (KSA 3, 581). On the contrary, to give in to such a need, according to Nietzsche, shows nothing but a lack of the will. The freethinker, however, is metaphysically autonomous; he would even feel cheerful at the news of the death of God (KSA 3, 573). Decorum obviously prohibits the open display of such ideas. Accordingly, in order to hide his unorthodox beliefs from the unenlightened and uninitiated, the freethinker uses the protection of a mask (KSA 5, 57).¹⁵ Indeed, Nietzsche's philosopher of the future must know above all how to conserve himself. Due to his changing self, he appears as the (at)tempter ('Versucher'), who promotes the search for a personal truth based on personal judgment. This attitude is called anti-dogmatism or experimentalism (KSA 5, 57-63).¹⁶

In aphorism 71 of *Der Wanderer und sein Schatten*, Nietzsche explains the paradox that his opinions, even though they are dangerous for those who are already endangered, that is, for those whose critical faculties are not sufficiently developed, nevertheless are there for the public to read and sometimes even to misunderstand. According to him, there are

¹⁴ This state of mind can be illustrated with Nietzsche's portrait of Goethe from *Götzendämmerung* (49). In Goethe are united several Nietzschean traits: the self-overcoming of a century, tolerance out of strength and not out of weakness, a joyful and trusting fatalism, and the notion of totality as salvation and affirmation. All this is called the new faith by Nietzsche and named Dionysian after the god. The freethinker is at war with what Nietzsche terms the underworld of the ideal; he is especially opposed to the Kantian mould of this underworld, that is, to "the thing in itself".

¹⁵ Nietzsche's example of the masked philosopher, that is recognizable for those privy to his chains of thought, is Socrates: in the same way that one might conceive of a human being that has to guard something precious and vulnerable and rolls through life rude and round as an old green wine cask with heavy hoops, the person that has to conceal his knowledge of the death of God might go through life in the guise of a dancer.

¹⁶ *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* is Nietzsche's first attempt at defining such a state of mind. The book is thus a manifesto as well as a performance, because, as the author will later say, almost every sentence expresses a personal victory over something which was not really part of the author's nature (KSA 6, 322).

two kinds of readers, the desirable ones and the undesirable ones. The undesirable ones are the readers with maladroit intellects or clumsy souls; they bump into Nietzsche's texts, fall over, and hurt themselves. It is by "cautious writing", by donning a mask or by employing dissimulation that Nietzsche attempts to prevent the mob, the populi, and the political parties from grasping the full meaning of his texts. Thus, his opinions will never be openly public.

This notion of dissimulation is dependent on a specific notion of style. The best style, as Nietzsche sees it, chooses expressions that impart a mood to the reader and listener; it can be just any mood in a state of being profoundly moved, which is man's most desirable state of mind; but it should not be just any man's mood, rather that of an intellectually joyful, bright, and candid human being who, in a final twist of the author's hypothesis, has mastered (overcome) all his passions. Such style embodies the good man while at the same time lending style to a man's character (*KSA* 3, 530). On the one hand, Nietzsche's particular notion of style stands for self-control or (will)power; this includes the will not to be understood (*KSA* 3, 633). On the other hand, it denotes Nietzsche's accuracy and scrupulousness as a writer who recommends to work on one single page of prose as on a sculptured piece (*KSA* 2, 595).¹⁷

Freethinking, according to Nietzsche, once it has become a trait of character, brings about moderation in action, because, among other things, it points out the restricted use, uselessness, or even danger of all sudden changes (*KSA* 2, 300). This Nietzschean chain of thought - free spirit, dissimulation, rhetoric, and politics -, that can be regarded as a Montaignean heritage, will in its overstated form permit me to uncover the original sources in Montaigne's text. The Nietzschean reading can further be justified by considering Montaigne's reasonable dissimulation, that is, the particular relationship between freethinking and dissimulation, as cor-

¹⁷ It is this novel art of writing which, if it be taught, may facilitate the birth of the good European. For that which is necessary is to learn how to write well and how to write always better, which is the same as learning to think better. Simultaneously, good writing or good style means to communicate matter that is worth communicating and to know how to communicate it in such a manner that it becomes translatable and understandable for all the European neighbors. This is necessary if that which is good is to become common good, if everything is to become open and available to the openminded ("die freien"). The aim of the movement is to prepare a world-political state that is yet to come, where the good European will figure as governor and supervisor of world culture, thus counteracting the threat of nationalism (*KSA* 2, 314). Nationalism is untimely and out of place in an epoch that sees Europe taking the shape of a supranational organization (*KSA* 2, 475).

responding to the figure of the "libertin honnête" of the seventeenth century,¹⁸ who, then again, may be a forerunner of Nietzsche's immoralist.

Montaigne's Freethinking

On Montaigne's entering Rome in October 1580, the Vatican authorities, in a routine examination, confiscate his books, among them a copy of the *Essais*. In March 1581, the books are returned to Montaigne, except for one: "Ils me retindrent le livre des histoires de Souisses traduit en François, pour ce sulemant que le traducteur est haeretique, duquel le nom n'est pourtant pas exprimé, mais c'est une merveille combien ils connoissent les hommes de nos contrées; et le bon, ils me dirent que la préface estoit condamnée"¹⁹ ("They did not return to me the book on the histories of the Swiss, translated into French, solely because the translator - whose name, however, is not given - is a heretic; but it is a marvel how well they know the men of our countries. And the best part was that they told me that the preface was condemned").²⁰ The censors reprimand Montaigne's use of the word 'fortune', his having named heretic writers (Théodore de Bèze and George Buchanan), his apology of Julian the Apostate, his maintaining that a person who prays has to be free from vicious thoughts for the length of his prayer, his regarding as cruelty any death beyond straightforward execution, and his educational program which, as they see it, implies that a child should be brought up to do just anything. According to Montaigne's personal notes in the travel journal, he protests his innocence by asserting that he had simply expressed his personal opinion, that he had included the items under discussion in his text not knowing that

¹⁸ According to J. DeJean (*Libertine Strategies*, XI) the libertines (libertine novelists) write as if they were prosecuted, thus producing a contagiously defensive style: "The libertine novelist invites his readers (and critics) to identify with him, to pity his persecution, and ultimately to write from the victim's position, to write defensively". C. Reichler (*L'Age libertin*, 23) defines 'honnêteté' for the libertines of the seventeenth century as "une vertu mondaine, une aptitude à développer une socialité harmonieuse, [qui] laissait libre l'intimité du jugement et des sens". The seventeenth century is a moment when 'libertinage' and 'honnêteté' coincide: "Ainsi, à un libertinage ouvert et revendicatif, conduit à l'échec par sa conception 'naïve' de la fonction des représentations dans le lien social et dans la psyché individuelle, succède un libertinage disséminé et masqué, caractérisé par l'émergence d'un type qu'on pourrait nommer le libertin honnête".

¹⁹ *Journal de voyage en Italie (Oeuvres Complètes)*, 1229.

²⁰ D. Frame, *Montaigne's Travel Journal*, 92.

they were errors, and that some of these items clearly had been misunderstood by the censors. At his good-bye visit in the Holy Palace in the April of 1581, Montaigne is urgently asked to put his eloquence in the service of the Catholic church, yet the Master's earlier misgivings with regard to Montaigne's too liberal ideas are politely concealed and the execution of the censure is left to Montaigne's discretion. In the later editions of the *Essais*, Montaigne makes additions, but does not cancel the offending word 'fortune'. Adding and piling up details and explanations in a disorderly fashion instead produces an accumulation of "stillest words". Thus, the conflict between authority and autonomy is solved in the same way that Alcibiades, in the essay "De la diversion" (III 4), solves a similar dilemma: "Pour destourner l'inclination des bruits communs, Alcibiades coupa les oreilles et la queue à son beau chien et le chassa en la place, afin que, donnant ce subject pour babiller au peuple, il laissat en paix ses autres actions" (III 4, 814 b) ("To change the direction of current gossip Alcibiades lopped off the ears and tail of his beautiful dog and then chased it out into the square, so that by giving the populace something else to chatter about they would leave his other activities in peace" [942]). Montaigne's reasonable dissimulation consists both in cutting out and in covering up his opinion in a verbal texture, which, if it were undone and put together again in a different order, might cost the author his life.

*Montaigne's Autonomy: "De la vanité" (Essais III 9)*²¹

This essay, which like many others begins with apparently random reflections on the triviality of Montaigne's literary project and of writing in general, is nevertheless conceived as a challenge to interpretation: "Je m'égare, mais plustot par licence que par mesgarde" (207 b) ("I get lost,

²¹ Recent interpretations of this essay are the following: M. McGowan ("Clusterings: Positive and Negative Values in 'De la vanité'") maintains that the essay contains a system of associations that redefine the relationship between wisdom, pleasure, and vanity. T. Conley ("Montaigne en Montage: Mapping 'Vanité' (III 9)") uses the concept of montage, in which figural and discursive orders, that defer and recreate meaning put forward according to dialogical principles, overlay each other. Thus, Montaigne lets emerge the notion of adventure in the essay as a term representative of a technique of writing that makes the word travel across its history when glimpsed in the webbing of signifiers. V. Green ("Montaigne's Vanity: Reading Digressions on Travel") treats the digressions on travelling as an inherent element of the essay that serve to recast and examine vanity in a more personal vein.

but more from licence than carelessness" [1124]);²² digressions, disorder, obscurity, changes of chronology, different layers of text, and misleading titles are employed by the author also in this essay in order to divert the inattentive ('indiligent') reader, and, above all, the unwanted one.

One concern, that is as dear to Montaigne as it was to his friend Estienne de La Boétie who translated Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, is the government of states as well as of houses. Yet, despite the wealth of advice concerning government that Montaigne lists in this essay, he is of the opinion that ultimately the preservation of states is probably something which surpasses our understanding (937). The citizens of Capua, for example, who were given the chance by Pacuvius Calavius to replace their entire Senate and who could not agree on one single replacement, in the end had to abandon their long desired plan of revolution for want of a better alternative and for fear of what mistakes a new unknown Senate would make. The rule that directs Montaigne in the government of his own house is not to exercise too much control, but to allow for some irregularity with regard to depenses, with regard to every members' honesty, provided there is a general plan pursued by the manager that is then by and large carried out by the household.

Travelling is a practice that suits Montaigne's personal love for independence. Although travelling is a vain occupation, not only because it exceeds Montaigne's means but also because it stems from pure love of novelty,²³ it is nevertheless profoundly pleasurable. Travelling, a vice according to the voices of common opinion that Montaigne constantly refutes in the essay,²⁴ becomes a pleasure and, ultimately, a virtue, because

²² The essay contains several passages that discuss writing, for example: "il adviendra facilement qu'il s'y mesle quelque transposition de chronologie, mes contes prenans place selon leur opportunité, non tousjours selon leur aage" (941 c); in addition, Montaigne consciously uses suggestion: "Ce que je ne puis exprimer, je le montre au doigt" (961 b), "par mon embrouillure", "par l'obscurité" (974).

²³ "Parmy les conditions humaines, cette cy est assez commune: de nous plaire plus des choses estrangeres que des nostres et d'aymer le remuement et le changement" (III 9, 925 b).

²⁴ "Je respons ordinairement à ceux qui me demandent raison de mes voyages: que je sçais bien ce que je fuis, mais non pas ce que je cherche" (949); these are his family's and friends' objections to his journeys. Another frequent warning he receives is the following: "il y peut avoir aussi peu de santé, et que leurs meurs ne valent pas mieux que les nostres"; Montaigne answers this warning by emphasizing his love for Paris and his identity as a French citizen. Just after this affirmation we also find him posing as a citizen of the world. He continues "Outre ces raisons, le voyager me semble un exercice profitable. L'ame y a une continuelle exercitation à remarquer les choses incogneues et nouvelles" (951). Then follow several standard objections Montaigne hears from family

the master's personal comfort and good humor will contribute to and ensure the well-being of the estate. In a certain sense, Montaigne admits, it can be said that good housekeeping and the enjoyment of one's home and family is increased by an occasional absence from home; similarly, the occasional obstacle of a lover increases Cato's appetite for his wife in the essay "Que nostre desir s'accroist par la malaisance" (II 15, 597 b). Accordingly, a king should not be so closely tied to the state as not to tolerate signs of independence among his subjects.

The other reason for Montaigne's love of travel is his incompatibility with the present political morality. The communities in and around Bordeaux have been turned upside down and it is surprising that the structure of the state is still holding together. Montaigne deplores the total decline in moral standards, yet warns that sudden measures cannot remedy the situation: "Rien ne presse un estat que l'innovation: le changement donne seul forme à l'injustice et à la tyrannie" (935) ("Nothing crushes a State save novelty. Change alone provides the mould for injustice and tyranny" [1084]). Montaigne sees a parallel between the decayed condition of Rome and that of France unsettled by wars. However, as suggested in Machiavelli's *Discorsi* (I 2), where a workable government is defined as one that is always capable of improvement, it is exactly this moving, changing, and ruinous condition of the French state that may, according to Montaigne, in the end ensure its survival. Consequently, in the same way that the ruinous condition of the state ensures its longevity, the security, indemnity, or immunity of the person who knows how to mix virtue with vice is guaranteed: "La vertu assignée aus affaires du monde est une vertu à plusieurs plis, encoigneures et couddes, pour s'appliquer et joindre à l'humaine foiblesse, meslée et artificielle, non droite, nette, constante, ny purement innocente" (970 b) ("The virtue allotted to this world's affairs is a virtue with many angles, crinkles and corners so that it can be applied and joined to our human frailty; it is complex and artificial, not straight, clear-cut, constant, not purely innocent" [1121]). The secret is to turn every vice, defect, or irregularity into something positive and to see the negative element in virtue. However, such an attitude is founded on compromise and Montaigne is not quite comfortable with it: he stresses, for example, his unwillingness to be grateful to kings, thus asserting his independence of mind; he also bears his neighbors a grudge for having to be

and friends: "Aucuns se plaignent dequoy je me suis agréé à continuer cet exercice, marié et vieil" (952); "Mais en tel aage, vous ne reviendrez jamais d'un si long chemin?" (955); "Mais en un si long voyage, vous serez arrêté miserablement en un caignart, où tout vous manquera" (960).

beholden to them for his life (III 9, 937 b). A yearning for liberty, that emerges from many apparently casual declarations of compliance, remains the author's most characteristic trait: "Je suis si affady après la liberté, que qui me deffenderoit l'accez de quelque coin des Indes, j'en vivroys aucunement plus mal à mon aise" (III 13, 1049 b) ("I so hunger after freedom that if anyone were to forbid me access to some corner of the Indies I would to some extent live less at ease" [1216]).

Political Measures Reflected in Contemporary Texts

The compromises that Montaigne makes in his immediate surroundings reflect those on the political level. In September 1561, the French king has Charles de Coucy undertake a journey through France that is meant to signal his willingness to pacify and integrate the Protestant minority. Since recent written efforts to save Catholicism in France appear to have failed, the king now prepares a strategy of non-intervention; however, it soon becomes evident that the concessions he is prepared to grant are not sufficient. Therefore the Edict of January 1561 finally grants religious freedom and political power to the Protestants of the entire French nation. This edict is criticized as dissimulation by Montaigne's friend Etienne de La Boétie (1530-1563) in his *Mémoire sur la pacification des troubles* (1561), where he denounces the admission of two religions within the state as the cause for the split of the nation into two different republics.

In his opinion, an acceptance of Protestant ideals inevitably leads to an undermining of government authority. Tolerance as the artificially rendering stable of a situation of imbalance, the raising of a minority to a status of equality, follows, according to La Boétie, an incorrect interpretation of the idea of liberty of conscience. The admission of two religions is incompatible with the king's honor and his good conscience, as well as with the politically desirable existence of only one truth. The king cannot refrain from judgment in this important question, he cannot leave the two contending religions to themselves, because the existence of two faiths will diminish the strength of the nation, a divided France will further the schism throughout Europe. Dissimulation, a pragmatic recognition of the opposing party at the smallest possible cost to the status quo, here threatens to be unveiled as such and to overthrow the state: "Quand bien il se pourroit dissimuler, encore seroit sans doute ceste dissimulation pernieuse" (46) ("Even if one were able to use dissimulation, this dissimulation would without doubt be pernicious").

Dissimulation is the king's cutting-out of his power, his feigning not to have what he has. It leaves the reality principle intact.²⁵ The notions of "tolerance" and "liberty of conscience" figure as simulacra of balance and stability.²⁶ They bear no relation to reality; they are their own representations. In a Hegelian move, they create suspension, a suppression through edicts that elevates the Protestant minority, at the risk of creating a state within the state. La Boétie proposes a reformed Catholic church as well as measures to carry out the reform, the most important of which are the restitution of churches and relics to the Catholics, the admission of Protes-

²⁵ The notion of the simulacrum derives from the texts of J. Baudrillard. Despite their being shortlived, they offer themselves for my analysis, because the author grounds his concept of the simulacrum in the Renaissance. In *L'échange symbolique et la mort* the simulacrum is a sign that takes the place of reality. There are two ages of man. In the age of representation, the sign, the icon, and the image have the same value as reality. In the age of simulation, the value of the sign does not equal the value of reality. The sign that first, was supposed to represent reality; second, to mask or to denature it; and third, to mask its absence, has never had any link with this reality, but reveals itself as being a simulacrum from the very outset. It is the Renaissance that initiates the epoch of the simulacrum. In this age of transition, the cruel, feudal, archaic, or caste society is transformed into the modern one, by the first order of the simulacra, that is, the counterfeit. The order of simulacra is symbolized by the stucco angel or putto: "L'arbitraire du signe commence lorsque, au lieu de lier deux personnes par une réciprocité infranchissable, il se met, signifiant, à renvoyer à un univers désenchanté du signifié, dénominateur commun du monde réel, envers qui personne n'a plus d'obligation". This exchange describes the passage from a limited order of signs to a proliferation of signs according to demand. The extension of material, whose worth depends on restriction, results in a metaphysics of the counterfeit: "Le stuc, c'est la démocratie triomphale de tous les signes artificiels, l'apothéose du théâtre et de la mode, et qui traduit la possibilité pour la nouvelle classe de tout faire, dès lors qu'elle a pu briser l'exclusivité des signes" (79). In his essay "La précession des simulacres" Baudrillard introduces the realm of the hyper-real in which happens a continual interchange and substitution of signs that have taken the place of reality and are now without reference point (10). The notions of simulation and simulacrum go beyond the notion of imitation, doubling, or parody. The simulacrum is a programmatic and programmable sign or signalling machine carrying out an operation of dissuasion from any real process. If to dissimulate means to feign not to have what one has, simulation goes beyond, because to simulate is to feign to have that which one has not. The difference between the two is a difference between presence and absence. The former does not question the principle of reality, whereas the latter puts up for discussion the difference between true and false, between the real and the imaginary. Occidental faith is based on the assumption that a sign can refer to meaning; something serves as security in this exchange. If God himself can be simulated or reduces himself to the signs that are meant to prove his existence, occidental religion is nothing but a gigantic simulacrum (16).

²⁶ See M. Smith's comments on Montaigne's use of the word (*Montaigne and Religious Freedom*).

tant assemblies under surveillance with the possibility of police intervention, and the prohibition of pamphlet literature (62).

The simulacrum of a tolerant reign established by the king and its effects on the people is described in La Boétie's *De la servitude volontaire*; Montaigne's essay "De l'inegalité qui est entre nous" (I 42) presents the king caught up in his position. Both authors illustrate their criticism of intolerant rule with a reference to a classical source, to Xenophon's *Hiero*. In the following pages I will give a summary of Xenophon's dialogue. I will then look at its interpretation by La Boétie and Montaigne, who both discuss the dialectic of philosophy-politics, sage-tyrant, and private-public.

Xenophon: Hiero

Xenophon's dialogue stages the paradox of the tyrant who desires to be happy. Hiero, who has experienced the pleasures and pains of both private and public life, denies having more pleasure than the private man. The envy the private man wrongly bears the tyrant derives from the former's inexperience of the tyrant's dismal life. Referring to his own sense-experience, Hiero tries to persuade Simonides of the fact that a tyrant's eminent position proportionally increases his pains. Instead of living a life of moderation, he lives one of complete fulfillment, so that his desires cannot even be stimulated any longer by a progressive refinement of incentives.²⁷ Worst of all, according to Hiero, the most basic human needs, the feeling of trust and love, are denied the tyrant.

Simonides insists that the tyrant can still be envied for his power which is based on material possessions (II). Hiero objects that this power is illusory; though it is openly displayed, it is only appearance.²⁸ Friendship, the highest human good, is out of his reach, for he fears courage and decency,

²⁷ "[S]o with respect to food, the one who always has all kinds takes none of it with longing. But the one who lacks something takes his fill with delight whenever it comes to sight before him" (I) (L. Strauss, *On Tyranny*, I 25).

²⁸ Concealed underneath lies the tyrant's unhappiness: in contrast to the private man, who can step away from his office, Hiero, in time of peace, can never reap the reward for his public commitment, because a tyrant cannot shed his public skin. As master of a people, the tyrant thus has full share in the work and no share in the pleasure, whereas the people, his slave, has full share in both. In addition, the tyrant always has to fight potential masters. He has no fatherland, because he himself is the cause of its repression. His desires are multiplied by his ever increasing opportunities as well as his ever increasing monetary needs (IV).

wisdom and justice as potential competitors and has to destroy them (III).²⁹ Therefore the tyrant lives in constant fear, deprived of pleasure and of genuine human interaction. He becomes a paranoiac who cannot even trust his guards (VI).

According to Simonides, the purpose of every man's life is to be honored (VII). The tyrant's plight lies in the fact that he aspires to his position precisely for the love of that honor which he interprets as being nearest the divine. Honor, however, is respect given voluntarily by a free man to a just benefactor. The tyrant, in acquiring his position, has to commit so much injustice that he cannot even hope to make the necessary reparations, let alone win the honor of worthy men.³⁰ Simonides suggests that the state be governed according to the administrative model employed in artistic competitions (IX).³¹ Finally, Simonides advises Hiero to look upon the state as his private household that has to be properly equipped so as to compete with other city states (XI). This would permit him to regard his subjects as citizens, to let them have a share in the government, and also gain the esteem of his enemies. The common aim would thus lead to the common good. The tyrant would be able to be happy without being envied.

Estienne de La Boétie: De la servitude volontaire

Xenophon's *Hiero* is one of the texts on the basis of which Estienne de La Boétie discusses the notion of tyranny in *De la servitude volontaire*. La Boétie states that the extent of the subjects' obedience in a tyranny is unnatural: it is found when an already servile people becomes further denatured by bad habit (bread and games) to such a degree that it accepts the tyrant voluntarily. In addition, it becomes inert and cowardly under his

²⁹ He has a split attitude toward the city, because he is dependent on it and, at the same time, has to protect himself against it through mercenaries (V).

³⁰ On the other hand, Simonides continues the argument, the tyrant is able to win much more gratitude by granting the same amount of favors than the private man: his greetings, praise, honor, charity, gifts, and favors are much more appreciated, because ruling ennoble the giver. Should he not, therefore, be much better loved than private men? However, with the same hand that he bestows favors the tyrant has to maintain order. He thus hires mercenaries who, then again, alienate his citizens' trust from him (VIII).

³¹ Work, values, and competition for honor will then contribute to the public good. Peace and prosperity, however, will not quench the subjects' aggressions. Thus, a private police that can serve as an army in the case of a war is worth some expense (X).

rule. The *Hiero* is an example of a mirror for tyrants in which they should see denounced their absurd quest for friendship and pity. A tyrant, whose policy consists in dulling the minds of his subjects by feeding them on games, has no claim to the moral goodwill of others.

The treatise starts by denouncing the scandal of one people's slavish obedience to a master who is not good, and enquires into the notion of freedom. According to La Boétie, a tyrant's rule of force disagrees with the natural disposition of the human soul which is inclined toward friendship, virtue, good deeds, honor, and love of one's neighbor. If a people consents to tolerate the tyranny of a single person, it is reduced to the state of animals.³² A people is by nature free and chooses between freedom and service. The reason why a people may erroneously prefer tyranny to freedom is that tyranny conveys an impression of security (10). Tyranny is a simulacrum. The tyrant is a simulator: he attributes his authority to his person. He is, according to La Boétie, a self-engendering monster, a parasite who wastes his people's goods. Thus, the people have a right to overthrow him by simply handing in their notice: "Soies resolu de ne servir plus & vous voilà libres" (14) ("Be resolved to not serve any longer and you are free").

The highest good of a people is freedom. Whether the love of freedom is a natural human desire or even a natural right is the question that introduces the second part of the essay. When a people does lose its natural love for liberty this happens because it is being exposed to the wrong customs (23). His nature is corrupted like that of a plant that has to grow in good soil.³³ The last part of the essay describes the cult of tyranny as a substitute for religion and analyzes the way in which a tyrant maintains his power with the help of the members of an oligarchy. La Boétie here harshly criticizes the French courtiers who have assumed the position of the king's warders rather than that of his counsellors. At the same time, they do not become aware of the fact that in trying to anticipate his every thought they are being deprived of their political power. The essay ends with a discussion of the tyrant's complete isolation, thus taking up the main theme of Xenophon's *Hiero*. La Boétie concludes with a glowing

³² La Boétie gives the example of two armies, one fighting for their own freedom, the other in the service of a tyrant. The former fight with courage. "Les autres n'ont rien qui les enhardie qu'une petite pointe de convoitise qui se rebouche soudain contre le danger & qui ne peut estre si ardante que elle ne se doive, ce semble, esteindre de la moindre goutte de sang qui sort de leurs plaies" (7).

³³ "La nature de l'homme est bien d'estre franc & de le vouloir estre, mais aussi sa nature est telle que naturellement il tient le pli que la nourriture lui donne" (29).

praise of friendship as a sacred relationship (53); it is based on integrity, equality, good nature, faith, and habit.

In this treatise, tyranny is defined as the rule of a simulator, by way of contrast with the just rule of a man of great valor. The author unmasks the notion of stability in a tyranny as simulacrum and he enquires into whether a people can be educated to recognize the right to tyrannicide. The people and the tyrant of La Boétie's imaginary country are examples. This can be inferred from the presentation of unambiguously historical and possibly contemporary data on one and the same level in the historical present. Thus the treatise does not betray itself to be a specific critique of contemporary government. Though *De la servitude volontaire* is a political treatise without allusions to contemporary politics it is therefore no less critical of tyranny. It is a pamphlet that addresses the powerless courtier as well as the king yet does not intend, despite the strong language, to call for revolution. La Boétie's text may therefore be seen as the expression of a certain class: it is the opinion of the representative in Parliament who tries to counteract the development of absolutism and advocates a return to classical privileges, where parliaments can control the king's innovations.³⁴

Montaigne: "De l'inegalité qui est entre nous" (Essais I 42)

The provocative independence of the wise man that Montaigne foregrounds in this essay is couched in a Latin quote from Plautus "*Sapiens pol ipse fingit fortunam sibi*" (*Trinummus* II ii 84) ("Why, the wise man shapes his own destiny"). The author brings out this quote by letting it be

³⁴ In her recent edition of La Boétie's text N. Gontarbert describes the treatise as a polemical text, emphasizes the author's play with verbal tenses which indicates his refusal to root his discourse in a specific epoch; she points out his use of masks for the governors and the self-critical attitude of the authorial self. According to her, the text facilitates multiple interpretations, both with regard to general abuse of power and specific mistakes committed by the king. Armaingaud, in Montaigne pamphlétaire, tries to convince the reader that *De la servitude volontaire* must have been written by an author more mature than the sixteen year old La Boétie. Therefore, it is Montaigne who transformed the treatise into a pamphlet against Henri III several years later. Armaingaud's only proof is the word 'hommeau', that allegedly describes the king. Strowski sees Charles IX, Dezeimeris sees Charles VI, and Barrère sees Machiavelli's prince as the tyrant of *De la servitude volontaire*. A recent apolitical and Platonic interpretation has been written by F. Rigolot, "Montaigne et la 'Servitude volontaire': pour une interprétation platonicienne".

preceded by a Latin passage from Horace that is summarized in French and by letting it be followed by a passage from Lucretius that is preceded by a French question which simultaneously serves as an interpretation of the central quote. Thus, Plautus is framed in a bilingual dialogue that is inserted in the French text of the essay.

The essay itself sets out to define inequality in various ways as 'distance', 'degrez', 'disparité', and 'dissemblance'. Yet the matter that gradually evolves as the author's main concern is the fundamental and natural equality of human beings who all are made of body and soul. As a matter of fact, an emperor, Montaigne states, is like any commoner subject to passions, illnesses, and fear of death. What we perceive as royal assets are merely imaginary and illusory advantages; the true goods in life are shared by kings and the people alike.³⁵

Underlying this discussion is the notion of tyranny exemplified by Xenophon's *Hiero*. Montaigne thus treats of the relation of fact with fiction, of reality with illusion, and of how we let our opinions be influenced by appearances. Montaigne's initial argument is that before we buy a horse, we thoroughly examine it, but when we get to know a man we suspend our critical faculties and tend to accept him at face value. A man should not be judged by his outward look, but by the degree of harmony between his body and his soul. Another criterion is the extent of his wisdom. Once a person has been recognized and understood as a microcosm, he can be judged by the manner in which he uses his specific talents. Only then can one begin to compare him to others. Montaigne asks whether a king can be distinguished outwardly as being superior to his subjects or whether any attribute of worldly power is rather a sign of lacking distinction. Kings do not only have to reign over their desires and those of their subjects. They cannot even enjoy their appetites, as the example of Hiero demonstrates, because these have been abundantly satisfied and have turned stale.³⁶ Their relation to pleasure must be compared to that of choirboys to the music they practise every day. In addition, a ruler in his elevated position is judged more severely than is the private man for having committed the same blunder.

³⁵ "Les avantages principesques sont quasi avantages imaginaires" (257 b); "Toutes les vraies commoditez qu'ont les Princes leur sont communes avec les hommes de moyenne fortune" (258 b).

³⁶ "[Q]u'en la jouissance des voluptez mesmes, ils [les rois] sont de pire condition que les privez, d'autant que l'aysance et la facilité leur oste l'aigre-douce pointe que nous y trouvons" (255).

A tyrant's life is thus filled with boredom, dissatisfaction and, at the same time, as Montaigne explains continuing the example of Hiero, with fear. He concludes that the advantages which princes enjoy are merely imaginary. They are relative because they can be attributed to every station in life. In general, kings are to be pitied rather than envied. If there is an overlord, be he good or bad, maintains Montaigne, his proximity can and should be avoided by the subject through outward conformity and spatial distance to the court: "car qui se veut tapir en son foyer, et sçait conduire sa maison sans querelle et sans procès, il est aussi libre que le Duc de Venise" (257) ("the man who is content to squat by his hearth and who knows how to govern his household without squabbles or law-suits is as free as the Duke of Venice" [297]). This sentence represents a reversal of positions: the essay stages the process of becoming a king and the reasons for a voluntary abdication with Montaigne assuming the part of both counselor and tyrant. The author traces and rewrites Xenophon's *Hiero*, and criticizes tyranny on the basis of humanist ideals and man's right to freedom within a private space. This private space is the key to the lifestyle which Montaigne monumentalizes in his essays:

De vray, sauf le nom de Sire, on va bien avant avec nos Roys. Et voyez aux Provinces esloignées de la Cour, nommons Bretagne pour exemple, le train, les subjects, les officiers, les occupations, le service et cerimonie d'un Seigneur retiré et casanier, nourry entre ses valets; et voyez aussi le vol de son imagination; il n'est rien plus Royal; il oyt parler de son maitre une fois l'an, comme du Roy de Perse, et ne le recognoit que par quelque vieux cousinage que son secretaire tient en registre (I 42, 257 b).

[A]nd in truth, apart from the title Sire, you can all but live like a king. Just consider for example those provinces lying far from the Court - Brittany, say. Take a lord who lives at home on his estates there and who has been brought up among his men-servants: note his retinue, his subjects, his officers-of-state, his pastimes, the way he is served, his ceremonial; then see how high his thoughts can soar. Nothing could be more royal. His own feudal master is mentioned, like the king of Persia, about once in a twelve-month; he acknowledges him merely because of some ancient cousinship recorded in his secretary's archives (296).

The passage illustrates one of the motives for the birth of the *Essais*, that is, Montaigne's voluntary or resigned retirement that goes hand in hand with his will to absolute independence. Montaigne, the subject and philosopher, becomes himself counselor and teacher to the king. He continues with Xenophon's dialogue and Hiero's main problem, the lack of human

relations: likewise, Montaigne, now in the part of a king, is looking around seeing nothing but apes, "*je ne voy rien autour de moy, que couvert et masqué*" (318) ("I can see nothing around me but hypocrisy and disguise" [298]). A companion essay to I 42, "*De l'incommodité de la grandeur*" (III 7), illustrates this royal plight.³⁷

Xenophon's dialogue is one of the texts on the basis of which the humanists, among them La Boétie and Montaigne, debate the relationship between philosophy and politics, between the sage and the king. Sovereignty, as Xenophon sees it, cannot be exercised openly; the wise man must never betray his superiority, but must carefully maintain the posture of a private person. For La Boétie, there is no counter-point to the tyrant, only a compliant court and a feeble, subdued, and seduced crowd. Even though the existence of common sense, natural dignity, and independence can be gleaned from the text, they do not shape the nature of the state nor are they grounded in natural law. The state is founded on the exercise of personal power; this power is illegitimate, both in a tyranny and in a monarchy and should be countered by passive resistance, a refusal to collaborate. Montaigne dismantles the royal exalted position and depicts the king as essentially a private person; the king appears as a human being subject to illness and deprived of his mystical elevation that was grounded in a theory of the king's two bodies. Montaigne's relationship to kings, therefore, is devoid of exaggerated deference. "*J'ay mes loix et ma court pour juger de moy, et m'y adresse plus qu'ailleurs*" (III 2, 23 b) ("I have my own laws and law-court to pass judgement on me and I appeal to them rather than elsewhere" [911]); this means not only that every nobleman can be his own king, but that kings are potentially exchangeable.

³⁷ In this essay, Montaigne engages in an analysis of the basis of royal power: it is certainly not based upon the king's prowess, because, as Montaigne in an autobiographical example shows, he himself as a little boy playing at sports with the village children, was always left to win out of consideration for his rank. However, too much respect for superiors can quickly turn into disrespect, and therefore Montaigne himself will choose a middle road in his own dealings with the king. Secondly, since kings do not participate in dangerous tasks, they cannot by right lay claim to participating in revels after a victory, nor can they rightfully demand their subjects' obedience. On the contrary, in reality kings are to a great extent dependent on the people's goodwill. But the people would only ever want a virtuous king. Therefore, doing virtuous acts, a mere advantage at the beginning of the essay, turns out to be every king's moral obligation. Having stripped the king of all the signs of his natural superiority, Montaigne concludes that he does have some qualities, but "*Leurs bonnes qualitez sont mortes et perdues, car elles ne se sentent que par comparaison, et on les met hors*" (898). Kings are continually surrounded by imitations and perversions of their own personality, so that in the end the only sign of their power is brute force.

The difficulty in keeping one's distance from the court as well as one's integrity in a political environment that uses every conceivable means to obtain information will be illustrated in the following pages by the examples of François de La Noue and François Hotman. Both are employed in diplomatic service by two different kings, Henri III and Henri IV. A brief look at their lives and some chosen passages from their works will evidence the difficulty Montaigne must have encountered to reconcile his duties to the king with the desire to practise a personal ethics that remains consistently high. Montaigne's reasonable discourse, that won him the respect of several kings and in particular the trust of Henri IV, can further be contrasted with that of Burrhus in the absolutist state of Racine's *Britannicus*. Burrhus is the representative of reason in a criminal court usurped by Nero, the "budding monster". The reasonings of the honest soldier,³⁸ who to the very end of the tragedy exhorts his former student to use his powers for virtue, the public good, and the love of the people, remain unheeded.³⁹

François Hotman

Observers of contemporary politics rightly recognize that dissimulation is employed by the king in his dealing with all parties of the religious conflict. François Hotman, for example, describes his reaction to the Edict of Union in a letter of 21 July 1588.⁴⁰ His half ironic comment on the king's Machiavellian maneuvering demonstrates that in the context of the increasingly centralizing measures, Montaigne's assertions of independence

³⁸ "Je répondrai, madame, avec la liberté / D'un soldat qui sait mal farder la vérité" (I 2).

³⁹ IV 3, II.1337 ("Et ne suffit-il pas...").

⁴⁰ "Je vous envoie [...] l'horrible édit (l'édit d'union) du tyran le plus impie et le plus scélérat que la terre ait jamais porté. J'ajoute du plus obscur et ténébreux. Tous ses actes, tous ses desseins, toutes ses résolutions sont si embarrassés, si obscurs et si ambigus, que les partisans des Guises eux-mêmes ne peuvent avoir confiance en lui. Les uns le traitent d'habile menteur, les autres disent que c'est un sot, un âne, un imbécile, fait pour porter le capuchon. Bref, je me suis souvent rappelé à son sujet ce que je vous ai un jour entendu dire en chaire, qu'il y a eu en Italie un prince habitué à faire toujours le contraire de ce qu'il pensait. Vous expliquiez alors très-savamment la définition fu dol, qui à coup sûr convient très bien à de tels monstres. Mais je ne me rappelle ni le nom du prince, ni l'auteur où vous avez puisé ce fait. Soyez assez bon pour m'indiquer le passage" (R. Dareste, "François Hotman, sa vie et sa correspondance", 424).

border on insubordination and are extremely dangerous.⁴¹ Proof of Hotman's anti-royalist polemics survive in the early pamphlet *Epistre envoyée au Tigre de la France* (1560), which, within the conjuration of the Duc d'Amboise, is directed against François de Guise and the Cardinal de Lorraine, the uncles and political guardians of François II.

The Cardinal is charged with taking advantage of his position as a guardian to the king, who is under age. He is accused of unbridled ambition, imposture, and theft. It is implied that he has wormed his way into the king's inner circle with the help of the women surrounding the king. He has hastened the war with Germany in 1552 and during the war intentionally has given bad advice. To crown it all, he aspires himself to the position of Pope (the polemicist refers to the cardinal's friendship with Paul IV) and intends his brother to become king of Naples. Atheism and debauchery are the order of the day and the law has been perverted to condemn out of hand all those subjects that are not in his favor. The pamphlet concludes with a vehement attack against the cardinal and an urgent demand to leave France.⁴²

Michel de L'Hospital helps Hotman obtain the post of royal historian in Paris, where he witnesses the massacre of Barthélemy and loses his entire property. The murder of the Protestants provokes a war of pamphlets throughout Europe. Hotman, who in the meantime has fled to Geneva, also participates with a life of Coligny, with *De furoribus gallicis* (1573) and with *Franco-Gallica* (1573). The latter, his best known pamphlet, aims at defending the liberties of the French Calvinists against monarchical oppression and attempts in a comparative history to uncover the juridical and historical principles of contemporary political events. The work, for one, writes against the growing influence of Italians at court, the massacre of Barthélemy, and Catherine's alleged appreciation of Machiavellian politics. In addition, Hotman's biography, his German heritage, his roots in German language and tradition provoke his turn toward

⁴¹ François Hotman (1524-1590) is known to have met Montaigne in person. Our knowledge derives from a letter which Montaigne sends from Bolzano and in which he mentions their encounter in September 1580 at Basel, where he had arrived from Plombières while travelling via Switzerland to Italy. Basel, Friday evening, 30 September 1580; letter of thanks written a month later (E. Blocaille, *Etude sur François Hotman*, 50; D. R. Kelley, *François Hotman, a Revolutionary's Ordeal*, 285).

⁴² "Donc va-t'-en! Descharge nous de ta tyrannie! Evite la main du bourreau! Qu'attends-tu encore? Ne vois-tu pas la Patience des Princes du sang royal qui te le permet? Attends-tu le commandement de leur parolle, puisque leur silence t'a déclaré leur volonté? En le souffrant, ils te condamnent. Va donc, malheureux, et tu éviteras la punition digne de tes mérites!" (François Hotman, *Le Tigre*).

a Germano-Gallic ideal. He attacks absolutism and the fact that the people are represented by the nobility. He criticizes any permanent corpus in the state and advocates a national poll. Provincial delegates should be reunited on the instigation of the king, at least once a year. The king should be elected and owe part of his power to the assemblies.⁴³ In his tenth chapter Hotman gives historical proof for the fact that the people from the very founding days of the nation exercised the supreme power not only to make, but also to remove the king. The commonwealth was built on the premise that it would be directed by the common counsel of all Estates for the purpose of which the king, the nobles, and the delegates from the several provinces should hold an assembly at a fixed time each year.

Like Gentillet's *Anti-Machiavell*, Hotman's *Franco-Gallia* is part of the political literature provoked by the events of 1572, among which are the *Reveille-Matin des Français et de leurs voisins* (1574) and Théodore de Bèze's *Du droit des magistrats sur leurs sujets* (1575), a development of Hotman's reflections into a constitutionalist doctrine of the state. These works all articulate two principles, those of constitutional monarchy and religious tolerance. In addition, they are part of the humanistic investigation of French constitutional sources whose original meaning was to be restored by means of philological methods used for the interpretation of the Roman law.

François de La Noue

The Huguenot soldier François de La Noue (1531-1591) is mentioned in the *Essais* for his goodness, gentleness of manner and scrupulous courtesy (II 17, 323 C). He is an important figure with regard to his political and religious affiliations as well as with regard to his *Discours politiques et militaires* (1587). A friend of the Duke of Guise, he feels attracted to Protestantism and is confirmed in his choice by d'Andelot, the brother of Coligny. After his conversion, he does not immediately have to test his faith, but keeps the good relationship with the Guise, who protect him and who even trust him, together with a group of others, with the task of accompanying Mary Stuart, the widow of Francis II, to Scotland.⁴⁴ After the massacre of Vassy he fights under Condé and participates in the battle of

⁴³ N. O. Keohane, *Philosophy and the State in France; the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, 49. Hotman's changing versions, his increasing royalist attitude toward the end of his life have caused some critics to portray him as an opportunist.

⁴⁴ H. Hauser, *François de La Noue*, 9.

Dreux, where Condé is taken, and where, together with Coligny, La Noue organizes the retreat of the defeated army. He is a dedicated soldier and continues in his profession, despite the loss of his left arm at the siege of Fontenay-le-Comte in 1570, whereafter he receives an iron arm and accordingly goes by the name of "bras-de-fer". By friends and enemies he is respected for his military valor as well as for his humanity and ethics, the discipline he keeps in his troops, his protection of the defeated, and for his general noble disinterest. These are also the reasons for which Montaigne honors him.

We know of at least two complicated negotiations, which La Noue is leading in 1571. One of these aims at advancing the marriage of Henri de Béarn and Marguerite de Valois, the other furthers the war in Flanders.⁴⁵ In the summer of 1572, at the time of the massacre of Barthélemy, La Noue happens to be abroad and hesitates to re-enter France. Having been commissioned by the King with the task of persuading the seditious town of La Rochelle to abandon their resistance and having finally accepted this commission on the condition that he not undertake anything which might make him look like a traitor in the eyes of the Huguenots, he moves to La Rochelle, where he is made governor by the citizens on November 23, 1572. As it appears, the eyes of Europe are on him to observe how he will acquit himself of his duty. It is one of the many occasions, where La Noue has to mediate between Protestants and Catholics, as a friend of the ones and an emissary of the others. However, La Noue undergoes a change of opinion and joins the "Politique" of the Duke of Alençon, is even ready to risk civil war in order to further the Protestant cause, as he announces in a discourse of January 3, 1574. Later, he offers his service to Henri of Navarre.

Caught in the Netherlands in 1580, he spends five years in the castle of Limbourg, where he reads and begins to write his *Discours politiques et militaires*. He falls victim to the constant change of alliances in France. For it seems that neither Henry III, for whom he presents both a useful tool and a formidable competitor for power, nor Queen Elizabeth of England, who initially favors him, use their influence on his behalf and refuse to pay the huge ransom which King Phillip of Spain demands for his liberty. Instrumental in his liberation is finally the future Henri IV, who has him exchanged for the Conte d'Egmont. The letters which La Noue writes after his release betray his utter pessimism with regard to the situation in

⁴⁵ Hauser, 24.

France.⁴⁶ But he continues to serve the royal alliance for the remainder of his life.

François de La Noue's *Discours* constitute not so much an authoritative contribution to sixteenth century political discourse and political analysis, but a mirror of the times on the basis of strongly felt political and ethical ideals. In his essays, La Noue presents himself as a soldier, a politician, and a moralist. The introductory treatises analyze the state of the French nation. The first of them discusses the reasons for the downfall of nations, that is, dissolute manners, lack of religion, and lack of justice. These are responsible for the disintegration of the French state. According to La Noue, without the help of God and the readiness of each party to negotiations, the fall of France is imminent. The second treatise forcibly represents the importance of harmony and of concord. This is a state established among all the good people who live as in a symbiosis of trees along a river. The third treatise criticizes religious intolerance.⁴⁷ Then follow proposals for improvement, first those of the opponents, then La Noue's own (IV). That which is needed is the reform of the laws and of the justice system as well as a reform of the nobility, who must give up their superfluously ornamental clothes ("les superfluitez en habits") and their sumptuous feasts ("festins somptueux"). The fifth and tenth treatise propose an educational program for the children of the nobility as well as for the nobility themselves. In Calvinist fashion La Noue preaches moderation and contentment in discourse VII, and, similar to Montaigne in his essay "Des loix somptuaires" (I 43), accuses the nobility of having been too spendthrift (VIII).

Foreign relations are a third important domain in La Noue's political program (XX, XXI, XXII). He maintains that the time for wars of conquest is past and that instead the French king has to limit himself to seeking greatness within his realm (XX), that is, to solve internal political problems. His military reform is based on an analysis of the army before, during, and after the civil wars (XIII). Drawing on his enormous military experience, La Noue proposes changes in strategy, rejects the mercenaries, who constantly change employers, and in his four paradoxes presents his deliberations with regard to the probable effect of recent military in-

⁴⁶ "[C]e peuple, qui se veut ruyner", Hauser 305, 309.

⁴⁷ "Voici comme plusieurs se gouvernent maintenant, si on leur dit, cestui-là est de la Religion: c'est donc un meschant heretique, respondront-ils. Dites aussi à d'autres, un tel est Papiste; ils repliqueront, il ne vaut donc rien. Et pourquoy les reprouvez-vous ainsi? A cause, disent-ils qu'ils tiennent une religion contraire à la nostre. Vrayment ceste promptitude est trop prompte" (*Discours*, 90).

ventions. There is, for example, the novelty of firearms, which means that suddenly a squadron of 'reitres' can beat a squadron of lancebearers. Common opinion would still attribute the victory to the lancebearers and has so far been proved right by the facts; however, this is due to the infantry's lack of training. The last part of the *Discours* is a thorough historical analysis of the religious wars of the 1560's in the fashion of a military diary.

Contemporary accounts and La Noue's personal letters testify to his honesty and love of honor; both are untimely ideals in his age. Typical of his political attitude is the sixth discourse "Que la lecture des livres d'Amadis n'est moins pernicieuse aux jeunes gens, que celle des livres de Machiavel aux vieux". It begins with La Noue's avowal that in his youth he found much pleasure in reading Machiavelli's *Discorsi* and *Principe*. "Mais depuis, qu'avec un jugement plus meur je suis venu à les bien examiner, j'ay trouvé sous ce beau voile plusieurs erreurs couverts, qui font cheminer ceux qui les suivent ès voys de deshonneur et dommage" (160) ("But since then, having with a more mature judgment examined them well, I have found underneath the beautiful veil covered several errors that make those who follow them travel on streets of dishonor and trouble"). Instead, he now recommends to read Innocent Gentillet's *Anti-Machiavell*.

François de La Noue is a representative of the French noblemen of repute and influence, be they Catholics or Huguenots, who were recruited to help the cause of the king in diplomatic missions. His much praised soldierly virtues are equalled by his staunch Calvinism and together with his emphasis on values they earn him the most delicate negotiations. In an epoch ruled by religious and political fanaticism, La Noue is a moderate who preaches faith together with tolerance. Yet, even he has a political matter of concern that is very near to his heart. For reasons of inner stability, he proposes a crusade against an external enemy, the Turks. Painstakingly he develops a strategy that will allow the French to chase the invaders from Europe within four years (XXI, XXII).

In the face of political upheaval, there are three courses that can be taken. The Huguenots maintain that society can be saved only by the adoption of Calvinist Reform proposals. The Duke of Guise refuses to countenance any change and insists that the advocates of Reform be suppressed by force. The advocates of the third course, among whom are Marillac and L'Hospital, do not contemplate sacrificing the principle of religious unity, but feel there is better hope of restoring it by reforming existing abuses than by uncompromising suppression of Reformers. The Catholic party is in itself once again separated into League and Politique.

The 'Politique', which originally is a coalition of moderate Catholics - among them Montaigne -, malcontents and Huguenots, and which is later headed by d'Alençon, gradually comes to be associated with Machiavellism. 'Politique' stigmatizes anyone willing to compromise on religious matters for the sake of political advantage or even for the public good. Eventually even the partial tolerance advocated by L'Hospital comes to be regarded as "political maneuvering". The problem for any writer is now to find a discourse in which certain arguments are not occupied by heretics or by the smell of civil dissension. Either they resort to the pamphlet, with ever growing radicalism (Hotman), to Calvinist moralizing (La Noue), or to Montaigne's reasonable dissimulation.

Political Theory? "De l'utile et de l'honnête" (Essais III 1)⁴⁸

In the first essay of the third book Montaigne develops a reasonable discourse that attempts to negotiate for greater autonomy for the individual from society. On the basis of his readings from Aristotle, Cicero, and Machiavelli,⁴⁹ the author outlines a set of problems that he illustrates with examples taken from history, from contemporary sources as well as from his personal experience. The essay moves between the two concepts of the useful and the honorable that Montaigne seeks to redefine. On the one hand, Montaigne maintains that public interest must not prevail over private interest.⁵⁰ On the other hand, he admits that the public good requires

⁴⁸ Recent interpretations of this essay are the following: P. Desan ("De l'utile et de l'honnête" et 'De l'expérience': le cadre idéologique du troisième livre des Essais") states that Montaigne's treatment of the topos of utile and honnête mirrors a change of ideology in the 1580s that goes from the knightly ideal, Ciceronian morality, and noble values to a pragmatic, commercial and 'bourgeois' concept of society. R. J. Collins ("Montaigne's Rejection of Reason of State in 'De l'utile et de l'honnête'") argues against Q. Skinner and N. Keohane who maintain that Montaigne supported what was later called *raison d'Etat*. T. Hampton ("Tendre Négociateur": la rhétorique diplomatique dans les Essais") maintains that the figure of the diplomat in the *Essais* is an important key to Montaigne's image of himself balancing the private and the public domain.

⁴⁹ The concepts of the useful and the honorable are discussed in Aristotle's *Pol* 1333a36, 1338a30-32, 1338b2-4 and *Rhet* 1361a16 (*chraesimon* - *kalon*, *anankaion* - *eleutherion*); Cicero, *De officiis* (utile - *honestum*), in particular the third book; Machiavelli: in particular the concept of *virtù*.

⁵⁰ "Ne craignons point, après un si grand precepteur, d'estimer qu'il y a quelque chose illicite contre les ennemis mesmes, que l'intérêt commun ne doibt pas tout requérir de tous contre l'intérêt privé" (III 1, 780).

treason, lies, and massacres.⁵¹ Accordingly, the concept of "le bien public" or "la nécessité publique", that corresponds to the later concept of reason of state, is exemplified in several instances.⁵² Yet in the course of the essay, Montaigne outlines a private space ('oikos', "for intérieur") that culminates in the definition of marriage as both the most useful and the most honorable tie and relationship. Thus, in several passages he tries to argue himself out of commitment and into compromise,⁵³ and in so doing institutes his personal authority, the authority of the self, that is, individual conscience: "Qui est infidelle à soy mesme, l'est excusablement à son maistre" (III 1, 772 b) ("If a man does not keep faith with himself he can pardonably not do so to his master" [896]). Consequently, to be honorable means to be faithful to one's self.⁵⁴ The retreat into a private sphere of activity enables Montaigne to conform to his personal morality.

Of course, Montaigne's retreat also has a strategic purpose; the above-mentioned essay I 42 is only one example of this move. In the same way that the libertin honnête of the seventeenth century uses fideism and skepticism with like dexterity, I suggest, Montaigne's politician or counselor preserves a metaphorical backshop ("arriere-boutique") to himself, while

⁵¹ "Le bien public requiert qu'on trahisse et qu'on mente et qu'on massacre" (III 1, 768 b).

⁵² "Le Prince, quand une urgente circonstance..." (III 1, 777 b), "Ostons aux meschants naturels, et sanguinaires, et traistres, ce pretexte de raison..." (III 1, 781 b).

⁵³ "De se tenir chancelant et mestis, de tenir son affection immobile et sans inclination aus troubles de son pays en une division publique, je ne le trouve ny beau ny honneste" (770). The problem of commitment is addressed as follows: "J'ay veu souvant en usage ces libertez contrefaites et artificielles, mais le plus souvant sans succez". - "Je ne veux pas priver la tromperie de son rang, ce seroit mal entendre le monde" (773). In order to be certain to be with the victorious party, he would sacrifice a candle to St. Michel as well as to the dragon. "Je suivray le bon party jusques au feu, mais exclusivement si je puis" (III 1, 769 b). When he is negotiating between two parties, he refuses to burden his memory with lies in order to betray one party to the other: "Je ne dis rien à l'un que je ne puisse dire à l'autre, à son heure, l'accent seulement un peu changé; et ne rapporte que les choses ou indifferentes ou cogneues, ou qui servent en commun. Il n'y a point d'utilité pour laquelle je me permette de leur mentir" (771). On the other hand, he expects similar consideration for his own good conscience from his king, that is, not to be told more than is necessary. This manner of carrying out negotiations is not to be considered as dissimulation, not even as prudence: "Ceux qui disent communément contre ma profession que ce que j'appelle franchise, simplesses et nayveté en mes moeurs, c'est art et finesse et plustost prudence que bonté, industrie, que nature, bon sens que bon heur, me font plus d'honneur qu'ils ne m'en ostent. Mais certes, ils font ma finesse trop fine" (773 b).

⁵⁴ "L'honnête homme", according to Montaigne is "l'homme meslé", that is, Montaigne as he describes himself in "De la vanité" (III 9, 964 b).

seeming to interact impartially with the world.⁵⁵ Dissimulation permits the freethinker to imperceptibly exercise control over his sphere of activity, yet this happens at the cost of his personality; he outwardly becomes a man without qualities.⁵⁶

Montaigne's retreat finally illustrates what we could call in Nietzschean terms his "perfectionism out of individuality". It is a retreat because of ethical reasons, where the only obligation that remains is the obligation to the self. Thus, Montaigne accepts malicious joy at the sight of a ship in distress as the natural relief of the spectator to be on safe ground and he acknowledges a list of vices as part of human nature (III 1, 768). Indeed, one of the aims Montaigne sets himself is to override taboos in his text, as he proclaims in "Sur des vers de Virgile".⁵⁷ Montaigne's careful cultivation of selfishness is facilitated by the withdrawal into private life. It is this protective selfishness that will be articulated in Nietzsche's texts as eccentric and extravagant individualism out of perfectionism. For Nietzsche, unselfishness weakens the inner economy. The stable self, therefore, must fortify himself against pity (*FW* 345), is bound to permanently bring something home to the *oikos* (*GM* Preface 1), and to maintain that which is uniquely his. Nietzsche's manner of explaining this conviction is by means of the mask, or by means of walling oneself in ("Selbst-Vermauerung") in order to avoid outside stimuli (*EH* II 3). Precisely because of the ultimate origin of altruism being the constitutive illness that compels individuals to endure the indignities of unfreedom, the salutary nature of selfishness is a means to becoming what one is (*EH* II 9).

⁵⁵ "Le libertin honnête doit savoir préserver l'autonomie de son for intérieur tout en livrant son moi social aux effets du dialogisme, et découvrir l'autre dans ses retranchements" (C. Reichler, *L'Age libertin*, 35).

⁵⁶ "Mais ce sujet qui se retire en son for intérieur, pour de là percer les désirs d'autrui, s'y conformer et jouir de sa maîtrise, que rencontre-t-il en son intimité? Quel visage a son autonomie? Hors de l'affirmation du moi social et de ses vanités, le sujet 'honnête' n'est-il pas dépourvu de visage? Détaché du manège qu'il fait tourner, ne se découvre-t-il pas pure persona?" (C. Reichler, *L'Age libertin*, 37).

⁵⁷ "Au reste, je me suis ordonné d'oser dire tout ce que j'ose faire, [...] Dieu veuille que cet excès de ma licence attire nos hommes jusques à la liberté, par dessus ces vertus couardes et mineuses nées de nos imperfections; qu'aux despens de mon immoderation je les attire jusques au point de la raison!" (III 5, 822 c).

CHAPTER FIVE

ADIAPHORA

Mein "Mitleid". - Dies ist ein Gefühl, für das mir kein Name genügt: ich empfinde es, wo ich eine Verschwendung kostbarer Fähigkeiten sehe, zum Beispiel beim Anblicke Luthers: welche Kraft und was für abgeschmackte Hinterwäldler-Probleme (zu einer Zeit, wo in Frankreich schon die tapfere und frohmütige Sceptis eines Montaigne möglich war!) (KSA 11, 552).

My "pity". - This is a sentiment, for which no name seems sufficient to me: I feel it where I see a waste of valuable abilities, for example, when I look at Luther: what force and what fatuous backwoods problems (at a time when the courageous and cheerful skepticism of a Montaigne was already thinkable in France!¹

It is possible to maintain that Montaigne is a modern not least because of his penchant for thoughts that emerge with the Reformation. Not everyone would agree with this statement. Yet one of the doctrines that can be traced in the *Essais* is Melanchthon's doctrine of adiaphora. It is based on a distinction between divine and human law and goes back to Luther's *Sermon on Two Kinds of Righteousness*, where the redeeming presence of Christ pardons all sins, and leads to a twofold definition of justice: one kind which the Christian attains in the realm of Christ, and a civil justice which is not part of salvation but is needed for the government of worldly affairs. This distinction is at the root of Melanchthon's doctrine of adiaphora. Adiaphora are things or actions (ethically) indifferent. Considered in themselves, they can become either bad or good.² Once this

¹ Nietzsche here obviously neglects the time span between Luther and Montaigne.

² After the defeat of the Protestants in the Smalcaldic war the Augsburg Reichstag of June 30, 1548, demands their return to Catholicism. Following bitter quarrels the Leipzig Interim is accepted in December 1548. It consists in doctrinal formulas designed to promote agreement between Protestants and Catholics in Germany. It confirms the decisive Protestant doctrines, but accepts essential parts of the Catholic ceremonies as adiaphora with Melanchthon's and other theologians' approval, such as the veneration of the saints and the seven sacraments. This provokes the adiaphoristic dispute, because a group of conservative Protestants, the so-called Gnesio-Lutherans who maintain the theological differences between Calvinists and Lutherans, reject the Interims which had

thought is introduced, there are some human laws which do not lead to salvation and which are not intended by God to be followed. Likewise, God intends a number of activities neither to be enforced nor forbidden. This means that certain actions, which in times of peace are indifferent, take on a confessional dimension in periods of public controversy.

Why could the doctrine of adiaphora have appealed to Montaigne? We must remember here that the standard discussions on adiaphora are part of Stoic philosophy and bear upon values, that is, upon the ideas of the good and of relative worth. The Greek philosopher Zenon examines the notion of 'value' according to subjective and objective criteria. He establishes positive values ('axia'), which are the useful and the good, and which lead to a life in unison with nature; and he defines negative values ('apaxia') that are detrimental and contradict the nature of a being (death, illness, poverty). Therefore, good is that which is useful either by its very essence or by being part of nature. Adiaphora are things and actions whose value or lack of value are never of such importance as to become crucial in the moral life of the wise man.³

All of the above ideas are adaptations of Socratic terms: Socrates maintains that things are not good in themselves, because they receive their value from the use reason makes of them. Accordingly, the truly good lies in ourselves, in the correct attitude toward things, which is facilitated by phronesis ('prudence'). The Stoics appropriate this Socratic heritage and elaborate it with the help of their philosophy of the logos. According to them, good is that which makes man good, that is, the ethically good. The good originates in our own decisions; it deserves recognition as our own achievement in which we can take a pride. Only that which is based on our personal merit can afford us pure satisfaction and therefore be ethically good. The good lies within man; it consists in unfolding human nature according to its own laws. Consequently, values are found within man, in the community of rational beings. Every being is, as mentioned, either good or bad or, to return to the topic, none of the two. All that which is not ethically good or bad is part of the group of indiffer-

been sponsored by the party of Melanchthon, claim that in "casu confessionis et scandalum" there is no adiaphora and begin to fight the Interim (J. Ritter, *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*). See also C. Manschreck, "The Role of Melanchthon in the Adiaphora Controversy".

³ M. Pohlenz, *Die Stoa*, pp. 119-23. Adiaphora - adiaphoron - diaphora: to differ, to make a difference; things indifferent, non-essentials, things that make no difference. Nietzsche sees the declaration of adiaphora as the beginning of Protestantism (KSA 7, 713 [206] and 743 [33]).

ent things or adiaphora. These neither contribute to happiness nor to unhappiness and are not decisive in the moral life of the wise-man.

In the sixteenth century, based on Melanchthon's division between human and divine laws, adiaphora come to signify beliefs, actions, ceremonies, and objects that are not necessary for salvation, because they are neither commanded nor forbidden by Scripture. Difficult situations arise when actions that are intended as matters for individual conscience are raised to the status of laws, become a matter of church discipline, or even, as happens later in the century, a matter of royal jurisdiction. Since the value of adiaphora comes to depend on the use human reason makes of them, there is, in general, an uncertainty concerning their status. An example of this confusion may be found in Montaigne's essay "Comme nostre esprit s'empesche soy-mesmes" (II 14), that describes man's inability to determine the rank of adiaphora or to choose between them. Here, as in many instances, the example amounts to a critique of philosophy.⁴

Does Montaigne consider his *Essais* as adiaphora? We know that he disparages his writing in the introductory passages to many essays, and rather than purely being *topoi*, these professions of modesty may actually have a strategic purpose. A very good example of such rhetoric occurs in the essay "Des prieres" (I 56):

Je propose des fantasies informes et irresolues, comme font ceux qui publient des questions douteuses à débattre aux escoles; non pour établir la vérité, mais pour la chercher (I 56, 302 a).

The notions which I am propounding have no form and reach no conclusion. (Like those who advertise questions for debate in our Universities I am seeking the truth not laying it down) (355).

Montaigne claims to offer fantasies, a disorderly collection of statements, that, in a comparison with the scholastic disputes, are as inoffensive as those and, accordingly, do not presume to interfere with dogmatic interpretations of truth.

[C]e que je discours selon moy, non ce que je croy selon Dieu, comme les enfans proposent leurs essais; instruisables, non instruisants; d'une maniere laïque, non clericale, mais très-religieuse tousjours (I 56, 308 c).

⁴ M. A. Screech gives the example of Buridan's ass that starved halfway between two identical foods; in the *Apologie*, Montaigne describes reason as follows: "C'est un pot à deux ances, qu'on peut saisir à gauche et à dextre" (II 12, 566 b).

[T]hey [my thoughts] are matters of opinion not matters of faith: what I reason out *secundum me*, not what I believe *secundum Deum* - like schoolboys reading out their essays, not teaching but teachable, in a lay not a clerical manner but always deeply devout (362).

Here the author expressly distances himself from religious texts and posits the self as the origin of his ideas. At the same time, he underlines the innocent and religious nature of his undertaking. In the essay "De la solitude" (I 39), he writes:

Et, d'un plus pressant exemple, Albuquerque, Vice-Roy en l'Inde pour le Roy Emmanuel de Portugal, en un extreme peril de fortune de mer, print sur ses espauls un jeune garçon, pour cette seule fin qu'en la société de leur fortune son innocence luy servist de garant et de recommandation envers la faveur divine, pour le mettre à sauveité (I 39, 232 c).

And (a more pressing example) when Albuquerque, the Viceroy of India for Emmanuel, King of Portugal, was in peril from a raging tempest, he took a boy on his shoulders for one reason only: so that by linking their fates together the innocence of that boy might serve him as a warrant and intercession for God's favour and so bring him to safety (267).

In the same way that Albuquerque holds up the boy to God, Montaigne holds up his *Essais*.⁵ Such statements permit him to create a space for the

⁵ The need for such precautions may be Montaigne's attraction to Protestant doctrine earlier in life: "[A]yant autrefois usé de cette liberté de mon choix et triage particulier, mettant à nonchaloir certains points de l'observance de nostre Eglise, qui semblent avoir un visage ou plus vain ou plus estrange" (I 27, 181 a); this passage is found in an essay concerning the erroneous nature of human judgment. Montaigne here admits to toying with Protestant ideas in his youth as well as to holding in disrespect some points of Catholic doctrine; he confesses to having a different opinion at the moment of writing the essay. Yet he also declares to always having refrained from seriously engaging in theological enquiry and from challenging Catholic dogma: "Cette si vulgaire consideration m'a fermi en mon siege, et tenu ma jeunesse mesme, plus temeraire, en bride: de ne charger mes espauls d'un si lourd faix, que de me rendre respondant d'une science de telle importance" (I 23, 120 c). The reasons for his reticence in embracing theological dispute are explained in the essay "Des prieres": "Fascheuse maladie, de se croire si fort qu'on se persuade qu'il ne se puisse croire au contraire" (I 56, 305 c); Montaigne's skepticism denies man the capacity to distinguish between the true and the false creed. "Et plus fascheuse encore qu'on se persuade d'un tel esprit qu'il prefere je ne sçay quelle disparité de fortune presente aux esperances et menaces de la vie eternelle" (I 56, 305 c); the Wars of Religion therefore result from a battle of mere opinions, he daringly maintains. Whether to be a Protestant or a Catholic is, at the time, a matter of personal conviction, and many people do feel free to embrace either the Catholic or the Protestant

unhindered composition of his *Essais*.⁶ Of course, adiaphora can be used to argue for greater state intervention, as will happen in the course of the sixteenth century. But in the case of Montaigne, they must be read as a critique of the state's increasing centralizing power: by characterizing a practice as nonessential it becomes either possible to limit that practice while still claiming that no one's religious freedom has been infringed, or, for the individual, to extend it while claiming that no state law has been disregarded. Thus, backed by the Catholic church and the positive result of her censure, Montaigne can boldly undertake to treat of any subject

cause and even to switch from one creed to the other. Montaigne acknowledges that he himself, in his youth, felt drawn to the Protestant cause: "Ils m'en peuvent croire. Si rien eust deu tenter ma jeunesse, l'ambition du hazard et difficulté qui suivoient cette recente entreprinse y eust eu bonne part" (I 56, 380 c). The task of embracing the Protestant religion could have challenged him because of the glory involved in martyrdom. Yet we also have Montaigne's repeatedly expressed fear of novelty: "Je suis desgousté de la nouvelleté, quelque visage qu'elle porte, et ay raison, car j'en ay veu des effets très-dommageables" (I 23, 118 b). Montaigne distinguishes between two kinds of novelty; there is natural novelty, such as new laws that are introduced by way of the unanimous consent of a village (I 23, 118 a) or such as the unheard-of natural defects of a monster-child (II 30). Similarly, custom, novelty's counterforce, is by no means innocuous throughout, as demonstrates the example of a woman who became so accustomed to carrying a certain calf in her arms that she completely missed the fact that it had grown up. Accordingly, custom as well as novelty are vital for the survival of a polis. "La religion Chrestienne a toutes les marques d'extreme justice et utilité; mais nulle plus apparente, que l'exacte recommandation de l'obeissance du Magistrat et manutention des polices" (I 23, 119 b); according to Montaigne, religion, a representative of custom, maintains law and order in a state. Any intrusion of a novel creed is therefore detrimental, not because it may not be as true as the old one, but because it overthrows the customary organization of the state. The skepticism that is displayed in these preceding quotes may be regarded as just one of Montaigne's many ways to confront the effects and echoes of the schism in his *Essais*.

⁶ Montaigne makes it very clear that he does not want to touch on questions concerning controversial issues at all. To the question whether moral concerns should be part of philosophy or of religion, Montaigne replies that they always are a matter of both: "Les sciences qui reglent les meurs des hommes, comme la theologie et la philosophie, elles se meslent de tout. Il n'est action si privée et secrette, qui se desrobe de leur cognoissance et jurisdiction" (I 30, 196 a). Yet according to Montaigne, philosophy cannot contribute to an understanding of theological questions, even though theology must be regarded as a moral science. He claims not to have any expert knowledge of theology ("Ce seroit mieux la charge d'un homme versé en la Theologie, que de moy qui n'y sçay rien" II 12, 417 a; "La Theologie traite amplement et plus pertinemment ce subject, mais je n'y suis guiere versé" II 16, 602 a). In order to secure himself entirely against possible attacks he says in a c-addition to I 56, 377: "tenant pour execrable s'il se trouve chose ditte par moy ignorament ou inadvertamment contre les saintes prescriptions de l'Eglise catholique, apostolique et Romaine, en laquelle je meurs et en laquelle je suis nay".

whatsoever. Accordingly, he criticizes misuse of prayer (I 56), he justifies suicide (II 3), he castigates the presumption of the torturers who regard their opinions as truth (II 5), he presents his personal declaration of faith (II 19), and he displays his unapproved ideas about repentance (III 2).

Skepticism and the Scientific Frame of Mind

Adiaphora may be read as characteristic of an era of metaphysical decay.⁷ The Reformation dismantles a value system and raises the problem of interpretation, first with regard to Scripture, but gradually with regard to an ever-increasing number of areas, until, as says Montaigne, there are more interpretations of interpretations than there are of matter.⁸ In the eyes of many humanists, an epoch of euphoric departure into the unknown gradually declines to an age of nihilism. They adopt a skeptical worldview because it will enable them to guard their intellectual liberty against the growing intolerance of both the Catholic and Protestant parties, while leaving them free to play off diverging value systems against each other in cautious criticism. Their skeptical reassessment of values brings forth a temporary substitutability of metaphysical and moral terms and creates multiply interpretative, polysemous texts. Of course, a skeptical attitude and a consciousness of metaphysical decay cannot be openly held up. Thus, numerous Renaissance humanists become fideists in an attempt to explain metaphysical, moral, and religious truths not by way of reason but by way of faith.⁹ Their declarations of a fideistic creed are similarly strategic as are disparaging declarations of things indifferent.¹⁰

⁷ G. Teskey, "Irony, Allegory, and Metaphysical Decay", 398.

⁸ "Il y a plus affaire à interpreter les interpretations qu'à interpreter les choses, et plus de livres sur les livres que sur autre subject: nous ne faisons que nous entregloser" (III 13, 1045 b).

⁹ In his article "Le fidéisme apparent de Montaigne et les artifices des *Essais*", Z. Gierczynski maintains that in a theory of double truth a veil of fideism is extended over the skeptical critique; Gierczynski speaks of "fausse naïveté", "l'imposture fidéiste", and "l'insincérité du prétendu scepticisme de Montaigne" and proves that the author's mask of fideistic faith turns the manual of despair, the *Essais*, into a text that teaches a practical wisdom based on empirical knowledge of human nature. Some more conservative definitions state that Montaigne's fideism can be regarded as skepticism with regard to factual knowledge only (R. Popkin, *The History of Skepticism from Erasmus to Descartes*), or as "conformist fideism" (T. Penelhum, *God and Skepticism*). H. Janssen (*Montaigne fidéiste*, 114) maintains that Montaigne scatters his essays with remarks on the complete separation of faith from reason and on the role of divine revelation in the discovery of religious truths. Yet he never explicitly spells his fideistic creed which

Many readers of *Essais* have tried to situate their author within the philosophical and religious traditions of the West. Montaigne often escapes such attempts because his work spans more than twenty years of his life and reflects his multiple interests. As a guide to the way in which he composes his most controversial text, the *Apologie*, one could usefully take the notions of adiaphora and skepticism. The skeptic's mode of thinking is one of doubting contemplation, which in its negative form may reject the possibility of knowledge altogether, while in its positive form it raises doubt to the principle of critical thinking. The Pyrrhonian skepticism in Montaigne's text questions the existence of any certain truth.¹¹ It refuses to decide in cases of conflicting evidence with a view to establishing a state of unperturbedness ('ataraxia').¹² Their judgment enables the Pyrrhonians to reach this state of ataraxy, that is free from the restlessness or disquiet brought on by knowledge.¹³ In this way, Montaigne's persever-

underlies his text. Montaigne's defense of Raimond Sebond on the basis of this creed takes the opposite course to the author's theology. This, according to Janssen, happens without Montaigne's being conscious of it. According to M. Raymond ("Entre le fideïsme et le naturalisme. A propos de l'attitude religieuse de Montaigne"), Montaigne sees Sebond's *Theologie naturelle* as a fideistic work and, while engaging in his defence, experiences a moment of awakening and realizes that he has to limit the scope of his undertaking, because otherwise he would refute both Sebond and his adversaries.

¹⁰ Nietzsche grasps the strategic nature of Montaigne's writing, in this case his skepticism, in a fragment: "Man ist erstaunt über das viele Zögern und Zaudern in der Argumentation des Montaigne. Aber auf den Index im Vatikan gesetzt, allen Parteien längst verdächtig, setzt er vielleicht freiwillig seiner gefährlichen Toleranz, seiner verleumdeten Unparteilichkeit die Sordine einer Art Frage auf. Das war schon viel in seiner Zeit: Humanität, welche zweifelt" (KSA 13, 32). Similar to quote 1, Nietzsche here again disregards a timespan and passes over the fact that the *Essais* were put on the Index only in 1676.

¹¹ H. Friedrich, *Montaigne*, 9, 71, 105, pp. 123. R. Popkin, *The History of Skepticism from Erasmus to Descartes*, 17-43, 44-65.

¹² In the essay "Que le goust des biens et des maux depend en bonne partie de l'opinion que nous en avons" (I 14) we find a lengthy passage on philosophy which Montaigne divides into three branches: one branch treats of things found, another treats of things not to be found, and a third treats of things that are still being searched. The Pyrrhonians belong to the third group: "L'ignorance qui se sçait, qui se juge et qui se condamne, ce n'est pas une entiere ignorance: pour l'estre, il faut qu'elle s'ignore soy-mesme. De façon que la profession des Pyrrhoniens est de branler, douter et enquerir, ne s'asseurer de rien, de rien ne se respondre. Des trois actions de l'ame, l'imaginative, l'appetitive et la consentante, ils en reçoivent les deux premieres; la dernière, ils la soustiennent et la maintiennent ambigüe, sans inclination ny approbation d'une part ou d'autre, tant soit-elle legere" (II 12, 482 a).

¹³ Pyrrho's pig is the example which Montaigne uses several times in order to illustrate this state of mind. In one of the instances he asks what the use of our reason is if it

ance in upholding his ignorance makes his skepticism assume an almost dogmatic firmness; by emphasizing the uncertainty of judgment he becomes certain of exactly this uncertainty.¹⁴ If, as has been maintained, the *Apologie* was written as a reaction against the Counter-Reformation in the wake of the Council of Trent, it could further be claimed that the aim of skeptical thinking is to re-establish a basis of modest facts, drawn, for example, from the animal world, on the basis of which we can begin to assemble matter for a new worldview. The *Apologie*, then, is an essay in defense of skepticism and, at the same time, of empirical, critical, and scientific thinking.¹⁵

In order to illustrate this further, we must remember that one consequence of the humanists' enthusiastic revival of Greek and Roman antiquity, one consequence of their critical spirit, is the rise of modern science. The results of knowledge rediscovered and assimilated dismantle the old faith. The *Apologie* plays with central concepts that emerge from this configuration, such as skepticism. Skepticism is an outcome of the scientific frame of mind and finds its literary expression, for example, in the

helps us know and understand things which will make us lose our inner peace (I 14, 54 a). We employ our intelligence to our disadvantage, whereas the pig, on a boat in the middle of a thunderstorm, stays calm. "Le pourceau de Pyrrho est icy de nostre escot. Il est bien sans effroy à la mort, mais si on le bat, il crie et se tourmente" (I 14, 55 a); the human being would accept his lot, if he were not unbalanced by philosophy in the same way that the pig is hurt by blows. In the third passage Montaigne says that philosophy herself refers us to such animal examples when she is at the end of her wisdom (II 12, 470 a). "Les Pyrrhoniens, quand ils disent que le souverain bien c'est l'Ataraxie, qui est l'immobilité du jugement, ils ne l'entendent pas dire d'une façon affirmative; mais le mesme bransle de leur ame qui leur faict fuir les precipices et se mettre à couvert du serein, celuy là mesme leur presente cette fantasie et leur en faict refuser une autre" (II 12, 562 a).

¹⁴ See Z. Gierczynski, "Le scepticisme de Montaigne, principe de l'équilibre de l'esprit".

¹⁵ Some recent interpretations of the *Apologie* are F. Brahami, *Le Scepticisme de Montaigne*, "La Question de Dieu" in: *BAM* 33-34; A. Kablitz, "Montaigne's 'Skeptizismus'", R. Runyon, "Trumpet Variations on an Original Air: Self-Referential Allusion in Montaigne's 'Apology'", F. Gray, "Montaigne et le langage des animaux"; R. Adams, "Montaigne"; Y. Bellenger, "Quelques remarques sur les allongements de l'Apologie en 1588"; M. McKinley, "L'accomplissement de l'Apologie de Raimond Sebond"; J. Miernowski, "The Law of Non-Contradiction and French Renaissance Literature: Skepticism and Negative Theology"; T. Cave, "Au coeur de l'Apologie: la logique de l'antipéristase"; T. Conley, "Mapping Montaigne: The Apologie as Diagram and Discourse"; T. Conley, "A Space-Event: The Apologie in the *Essais* of 1595"; C. Blum, *Montaigne. Apologie de Raimond Sebond. De la Theologia à la Théologie*; — "L'Apologie de Raimond Sebond et le déplacement de l'apologétique traditionnelle à la fin du XVIe siècle".

translation of Sextus Empiricus' *Hypotyposes* by Henri Estienne. Montaigne's *Apologie* begins by questioning the utility of science. Whether it can lead to a knowledge of the truth is a problem Montaigne does try to answer in several of his essays, but the typically humanistic inquiry into and rejection of the value of science, that is, human reason, in this particular essay is done from the point of view of a non-theologian on the basis of Sebond's *Théologie Naturelle* which Montaigne translated only ten years after it was put on the Index. Sebond establishes a hierarchy of being, living, feeling, and understanding, which helps man to arrive at an insight into the divine (pure intelligence). This intelligence, which is the highest good of the human being, is the right use of the free will. Thus, the virtuous man is the one who is knowledgeable. For Montaigne, participation cannot happen through reason exclusively, but must rest in faith, in participation in the humane, the body, passion, and, to propose a daring chain of thought, the Dionysian. The beginning and end of the *Apologie* are declarations of a fideistic faith; the essay itself is a critique of reason through reason. As such, it constitutes an exercise in sprezzatura, a Protean and, still more, a Dionysian project, non-teleological play, and, in Nietzschean terms, an expression of the innocence of becoming.¹⁶

La Théologie Naturelle de Raymond Sebond

It can certainly be claimed now that the threefold crisis of the sixteenth century, the Reformation crisis, the humanistic crisis, and the scientific crisis is mirrored in the *Apologie* by Montaigne's use of adiaphora, his skepticism, and his critique of science or the scientific frame of mind. It is because adiaphora goes back to Stoic philosophy that Montaigne can take it up in a characteristic humanist gesture in order to then all the more safely embrace it, fully conscious of its use by the Protestants.

Je trouvay belles les imaginations de cet auteur, la contexture de son ouvrage bien suivie, et son dessein plein de piété (II 12, 106 a).

¹⁶ This is a Nietzschean concept that results from nihilism and the death of God. The death of god provokes chaos in the world of moral values, because with the absence of the Last Judgment these values lose their meaning. The reward for a virtuous life has been removed. Everybody is free of responsibility and therefore in a state that Nietzsche calls the innocence of becoming.

I found the concepts of Sebond to be beautiful, the structure of his book well executed and his project full of piety (491).

This is Montaigne's judgment of the *Théologie Naturelle* by Sebond whose great faith he emphasizes frequently in the *Apologie*. From a contemporary point of view, this opinion is unorthodox to say the least.¹⁷ Sebond develops a man-centered theology with an emphasis on human reason; in comparison, Montaigne's *Apologie* appears to support a God-centered world view. In the following pages I outline some of Sebond's concepts underlying the *Apologie* in order to situate Montaigne's project.

Sebond's *Théologie Naturelle* presents a 'science', a Christian doctrine, that teaches the reader how to attain knowledge of God through self-knowledge. Of the two books that have been given to man by God, nature and the Bible, man, in his natural inclination to search for truth is advised to study the former. He will learn that the human being stands in the middle of a ladder representing the universe (stones, trees, animals, men) and participates in four kinds of existence, that is, being, living, feeling, and comprehending ('être,' 'vivre,' 'sentir,' 'entendre') (I). God is pure being, an abyss of essence (III), and intelligence. Man is made of being and non-being.

Or afin qu'ainsi hors de luy, comme il [l'homme] est, et s'ignorant, il puisse estre ramené à soy et instruit de la nature, on luy presente cette belle université des choses, et des creatures, comme une droite voye et ferme eschelle, ayant des marches tres-asseurees, par où il puisse arriver à son naturel domicile, et se remonter à la vraye cognoissance de sa nature. Pour cet effet tout y est diversifié par un bel ordre de reings de tres-juste proportion. Les choses y sont, les unes basses, les autres hautes, celles-ci parfaites, celles-là imparfaites (I).

But being thus outside himself and in ignorance of himself, man, in order to be led back to himself and to be enlightened about nature, is shown this beautiful totality of things and of creatures that is like a straight path and stable ladder with very firm steps, by means of which he can arrive at his natural dwelling-place and ascend to the true knowledge of his nature. For

¹⁷ Both the translation and *Apologie* have thus given rise to a dispute regarding Montaigne's creed. The question that is commonly being asked by critical literature with regard to Montaigne's creed is whether he was an infidel or whether he sincerely believed in Catholic principles. D. Frame ("Did Montaigne betray Sebond?") and R. Aulotte (*Montaigne. Apologie de Raimond Sebond*, pp. 101) have both given a survey of opinions.

this purpose everything is divided by a good order of very just proportion. Some things there are low, some high, perfect these and imperfect those.¹⁸

In this process of understanding, man will recognize the nature of the universe, consider the worth of each thing and being in itself, compare himself to all the other creatures, note differences and similarities, thus in the end arriving at an understanding of himself and his situation, his place in the universe. He will see that the nature of the relationship between God and the world is like the one between sun and moon:

D'avantage comme la clarté de la Lune se perd et s'esvanouist en la presence du Soleil, ainsi s'obscurcist l'estre du monde assorti à l'estre de Dieu: et plus nous l'en approchons, plus il s'appetisse: là où si nous le considerons tout à part soy, il nous semble grand et merveilleux, comme la Lune esclaiee largement lors qu'elle est esloignée du Soleil (XXIV).

Moreover, like the moonlight that is lost and disappears in the presence of the sun, the being of the world is darkened compared to the being of God: the more we approach it, the smaller it becomes: to the point that when we look at it from afar, it seems great and wonderful to us; like the moon that only shines brightly when it is far from the sun.¹⁹

In climbing the ladder of knowledge, man will see that light is intelligence; it is incorporeal and incomprehensible to the human intellect in its excellence, simplicity, and infinity. It comes into existence when God sees his being represented in his own contemplation of himself as in a mirror.

¹⁸ The translations of Sebond's text are my own.

¹⁹ This is a metaphor of participation that is found in Plato, in Dante, is later used by Descartes as well as by Locke, and becomes a key metaphor for the Enlightenment. Plato uses it in the sixth book of the *Republic*, where it describes the degree to which we participate in the good (507e). The eye of the soul perceives truth and reality as light, essence, clarity, permanence; change, movement, and organic life are perceived as darkness, loss of intelligence, and power of reason (508d). Book VII starts with the cave parable, in which the ascent to philosophical knowledge is compared to an ascent into sunlight from a cave. Dante, in his *Paradiso*, illustrates participation in the divine light with the image of glory as an effect of God illuminating the seven hemispheres according to their rightful degree of participating in the divine light. The wax of the world (the layers of spheres) is stamped by the imprint of the divine seal (lamp of the world). In her mirror experiment, Beatrice finds that some areas do not shine as much as others. The metaphor of participation that we find in Sebond associates the degree of illumination with distance from God.

[I]l s'ensuit, que l'intelligence de Dieu est aussi incomprehensible et infinie, et qu'elle contemplant ce grand estre, comme un miroir universel, contemple par mesme moyen et conçoit la perfection, l'immortalité et la toute puissance, ce qui a esté, ce qui est, ce qui sera, et ce qui pourroit estre (XXX).

It follows that divine intelligence is also incomprehensible and infinite, and that in contemplating this great being, like a universal mirror, in the same way contemplates and conceives of perfection, of immortality and of omnipotence, of that which has been, is, will be, and could be.

Finally, intelligence is linked to the free will ('libéral arbitre'). This is a present made by God to man. God embodies complete harmony of intelligence and will (XXXVI). With the help of the free will, man can attain reason and freedom (LXII). The free will is to be used for virtuous actions. Thus, man is responsible for his decisions and is alone responsible for the amount of grace that will be accorded to him (LXXXII). The free will is the greatest, the most singular, and the most perfect thing in nature. It is the seat of God (CIII). Intelligence and free will enable man to recognize the diversity of God's creation, his goodness, wisdom, omnipotence, and his own obligation toward his creator (LXIII). Love of God is an obligation, due in exchange for the gift of the will. It is always as worthy as the object it loves (CXXIX). The will and intelligence (God) are linked as in a marriage. According to Sebond, intellectual pursuits, therefore, will permit man to participate in the divine.

These are, in a few paragraphs, those points of Sebond's doctrine which will carry weight in the ensuing reading of the *Apologie*. In the second book, Sebond discusses the divine origin of the Bible, the immortality of the soul, the angelic nature, original sin, redemption, the sacraments, the Last Judgment, and resurrection. For contemporary critics, the offensive item in this natural theology is Sebond's emphasis on human reason that performs a philosophical or intellectual cognition of supernatural dogmatics. In professing to defend the *Théologie Naturelle*, Montaigne analyzes and rewrites Sebonds arguments, thus developing his own personal creed in the *Apologie*.

The Apologie de Raimond Sebond

In contrast to Sebond, who establishes a doctrine, Montaigne begins by claiming not to develop what he calls 'une science'. The word 'science' in

the *Essais* displays a spectrum of meanings. In the essay I 25 it means knowledge: pedantic, scholastic, doctrinal, and simply memorized, on the one hand; digested experience become useful, on the other hand. I 26 defines 'science' (knowledge) as both an ornament and a basic commodity, whose teaching has to go hand in hand with a knowledge of right and wrong. In I 31 'science' means ethics. I 54 uses the word in the sense of learned ignorance, underlining the futility of a display of erudition. In II 10 Montaigne develops the notion of 'science' as a method of observation created by him. II 37 uses 'science' both in a modern sense for medicine, the sciences - while criticizing their lack of a rational foundation - and as opinion, conviction. In III 2 Montaigne uses the word for a religious and moral therapeutical act, a remedy that re-establishes reason by means of recollection.²⁰ Keeping this semantic variety in mind, it should be possible

²⁰ Due to the nature of the French language at the moment of the *Essais*' composition we find a multiplicity of meanings that the concept takes on in Montaigne's work. In "Du pédantisme" (I 25), for example, Montaigne tries to define knowledge and its value in a critique of scholastic works. Knowledge is both good and bad in so far as it can either expand the soul or stifle the spirit. Purely bookish knowledge is useless and turns the aspiring philosopher into a parrot. Knowledge should be balanced by a good nature and by discipline as well as by the recognition that nature furnishes every being with different assets: some men will be more apt for intellectual pursuits than others. I 26 defines knowledge through judgment. "Des cannibales" (I 31) defines 'science' as the natural, innate knowledge of morals, which Montaigne discovers in those barbarous nations that are supposed not to possess it: "mais toute leur science ethique ne contient que ces deux articles, de la resolution à la guerre et affection à leurs femmes" (I 31, 206 a). It is the simplicity of such ethics that makes them attractive for Montaigne.

In "Des vaines subtilitez" (I 54) the word 'science' comprises the contrast between art and nature. Montaigne discusses poetry and knowledge in their natural and artificial expression. Poetry, especially the art of the acrostic, is an example of those useless skills which purely recommend themselves by their difficulty or novelty. They are too affected to be appreciated as poetry any longer, having passed the limits of artificiality. Courtly poetry, says Montaigne, may display artificial simplicity to such a degree that it resembles popular poetry. In analogy, the learned ignorance of the sage may appear the same as the ignorance of the uneducated. These two kinds of knowledge characterize two kinds of Christians. One accepts the Bible in its literal meaning. The other interprets it, but still does not arrive at the last stage of illumination. Montaigne has found a middle ground between a display of learning and ignorance in his *Essais*, which, as a consequence, will please neither the very uneducated nor the extremely educated, but the average person only.

The *Essais* cannot be regarded as a scientific text. This is Montaigne's introductory statement to "Des livres" (II 10). His definition of 'science' in this essay is personal knowledge of a thoroughly familiar subject, that is, the self, at different moments ("la science qui traite de la connoissance de moy mesmes, et qui m'instruit à bien mourir et à bien vivre"; II 10, 388 a) as well as the art of describing it at different times

now to structure the *Apologie*, not an easy task, as is evident from the multiple results which are available.²¹ The following analysis of the *Apologie* which is guided by the concept of science intends to show how the author distrusts the traditional religious discourse as well as the new scientific one and tries to maintain a distance to both.

“Knowledge is virtue, ignorance is vice”; this is the premise that Montaigne will discuss in the *Apologie*. In dealing with knowledge (‘science’), it is important to have a feeling for decorum, as the author emphasizes at the beginning of the essay. His father’s attitude to knowledge and erudition clearly was one of indiscriminate adoration; Pierre Eyquem venerated

(“jusques à quel point monte, pour cette heure, la connoissance que j’en ay. Qu’on ne s’attende pas aux matieres, mais à la façon que j’y donne”; II 10, 78 a).

In the essay “De la ressemblance des enfans aux pères” (II 37), medicine figures as an example of science. Montaigne’s ironical and critical attitude toward the sciences is a heritage from his father, together with the stone, the castle of Montaigne, and the love of knowledge. Montaigne has acquired enough personal experience to legitimize this aversion: “La medecine se forme par exemples et experience; aussi fait mon opinion” (II 37, 742 a). For Montaigne, the Golden Age is a time where doctors did not exist. Despite their general lack of knowledge, they exercise tyrannical authority over souls rendered feeble by illness and dream of converting their art into a religion. Medicine in Montaigne’s days is yet in a rudimentary state and must be regarded as only one of many extant opinions or ways of thinking. Many problems are still unsolved, exactly the way they have always been, as Montaigne shows by presenting the ancient debate on the original cause of maladies as an example. Montaigne’s suggestions for a medical reform are followed by his description of customary remedies and medical customs as both good and bad. Medicine should be seen as subject to judgment and change, he suggests, instead of which it is often a synonym, or even an allegory for creed, faith, and religion.

In the essay “Du repentir” (III 2) ‘science’ describes Montaigne’s moral and religious convictions. The author here describes the vicious and the virtuous soul: vice, according to him, is a lack of reason that leaves repentance like an ulcer in the soul. Repentance is “une desdite de nostre volonté et opposition de nos fantasies, qui nous pourmene à tout sens” (III 2, 785 b). Thus, repentance is not a religious act but rather an act of moral hygiene. Yet there is both good and bad repentance. Bad repentance is done in expectation of recompense in the here and now and is based on ‘gloire’ rather than on ‘conscience’. Good repentance is based on a life lived according to the maxim of Socrates, a life whose greatness lies in moderation. Montaigne claims not to wear a mask which he would have to re-adjust through repentance. Ideally, repentance should not be necessary because man should always live in harmony with himself, humbly, in reasonable, conscious submission to the will of God. Repentance should be no more than a reinstallation of reason with the help of God, after a short deviation from the path of humility.

²¹ P. Villey, *Les sources et l’évolution des Essais de Montaigne*, 185; H. Janssen, *Montaigne fidéiste*, 114; F. Gray “Montaigne and Sebond: the Rhetoric of Paradox”; Y. Bellenger, *Montaigne, une fête pour l’esprit*, 197; R. Aulotte, *Montaigne. Apologie de Raimond Sebond*, pp. 61; D. L. Schaefer, *The Political Philosophy of Montaigne*, 43.

learning like a thing divine, thus providing a model both good and bad for his son. Several scholars that Montaigne mentions embody different attitudes toward knowledge: Bunel, Luther, Augustine, Sebond, Turnebus, and, of course, Montaigne himself. Then, in the first attack on the *Apologie*, Sebond is condemned for basing his faith on human reason instead of divine grace. Montaigne's reply is that we must

accompagner nostre foy de toute la raison qui est en nous, mais tousjours avec cette reservation de n'estimer pas que ce soit de nous qu'elle depende, ny que nos efforts et argumens puissent atteindre à une si super-naturelle et divine science (II 12, 418 a).

accompany our faith with all the reason that lies within us - but always with the reservation that we never reckon that faith depends upon ourselves or that our efforts and our conjectures can ever themselves attain to a knowledge so supernatural, so divine (492).

Although we have the capacity to use our reason, change is the human condition, consequently, we are too fickle to agree in our interpretations of texts, notably in the interpretation of Scripture. We are too fickle to even be atheists. The knot that exists between judgment and will is not tied by reason, but by divine authority, that is, grace. Accordingly, human reasonings and discourses are merely form, divine grace alone is matter.²²

This declaration of fideism leads to the second attack: Sebond's arguments are accused of being poorly founded. Montaigne counters this with the statement that human reason cannot do any better;²³ our attempts to observe the universe and to establish an order ('science') on the basis of our feeble understanding are futile. Here, human imagination is criticized together with any intellectual effort. In the cat example that follows, the author takes man from the ladder that has been established by Sebond. What is more, animal reason may even be superior to human reason. This can be seen as either a facetious argument, or as reasonable, if by reason is meant the reasonable use of our senses. Indeed, the animals are no better no worse equipped for life than is man. Similar to him, the animals have a language and gestures of their own, and who would persist in maintaining that human language is more natural or more efficient, if it cannot even adequately describe Montaigne's relationship to the cat? Laughter, from time immemorial a sign of humanity, is also found in ani-

²² II 12, pp. 422.

²³ "[N]ostre sagesse n'est que folie devant Dieu" (II 12, 427 a).

mals. It follows that all the distinctions and categories devised by man are fancy. More arguments then follow for the equality between human beings and animals and the author concludes:

Pourquoy disons nous que c'est à l'homme science et connoissance bastie par art et par discours, de discerner les choses utiles à son vivre et au secours de ses maladies, de celles qui ne le sont pas; de connoistre la force de la rubarbe et du polipode? (II 12, 440 a)

Why do we say, in the case of Man, that distinguishing plants which are useful for life or for medicines from those which are not (recognizing, say, the virtues of rhubarb or polypody) is a sign that he has scientific knowledge based on skill and reason? (517)

The ability to learn is also not bestowed on man alone, because there are examples of trained animals. Then ensues a seemingly endless list of examples to be perused with curiosity by the reader, which ends in

[n]ous admirons et poisons mieux les choses estrangeres que les ordinaires; et, sans cela, je ne me fusse pas amusé à ce long registre (II 12, 445 a).

[m]uch more than everyday things, far-off things move us to wonder; they impress us more; otherwise I would not have spent so much time over this long catalogue (521).

Montaigne is holding up the mirror to the reader, showing him how indiscriminate human judgment is in following and liking these examples. Any science, such as the one that Montaigne just 'built' on the basis of such judgment, must be vain. A transition follows that serves as a counterargument: we reject what we do not know and what we do not understand.²⁴ The author cites anecdotes of religious elephants, the flight of birds, animal sympathy, the everyday needs of animals, their malicious behavior, housekeeping, war, loyalty, gratitude, their state, symbioses, courage, penitence, clemency, and society. They all serve to underline the correspondences between men and animals. The list is continued with physical

²⁴ "Tout ce qui nous semble estrange, nous le condamnons, et ce que nous n'entendons pas" (II 12, 446 a).

beauty and noble causes that are not necessarily to be attributed to human nature alone.²⁵

An enumeration of defaults shows the greatest deficiency of man: he is prone to succumb to passion. Accordingly, obedience and humility must counterbalance this default. Montaigne then engages in a short critique of Aristotle, the father of science and theology, which first turns into a critique of medicine, then of dogmatism. Man's highest good is tranquillity of body and soul. This is found in good health alone and cannot be based on science. Montaigne here continues his critique of 'opinions', be they religious, scientific, or philosophical.²⁶ He employs irony and paradox to dismantle the learning (science) of his age.²⁷ To be mentally stable therefore means to free one's memory from all appearance of knowledge and self-sufficiency, for knowledge amounts to rigidity, and Montaigne's aim is to remain flexible, in continual metamorphosis. The art of metamorphosis is an art of living, that combines Pyrrhonism with the notion of sprezzatura, nonchalance, that is, elaborate simplicity which disguises any sign of effort with grace.²⁸

The science which is criticized throughout the essay is unnecessary ballast if we aspire to participate in divine truth. To define God by means of human categories that are tainted by the passions, our greatest default, is presumption. Participation is alone possible through *docta ignorantia*,²⁹ or 'science' as 'inscience', a word which Montaigne coins in his essay on

²⁵ "Par où il appert que ce n'est par vray discours, mais par une fierté folle et opiniâtreté, que nous nous préferons aux autres animaux et nous sequestrons de leur condition et société" (II 12, 465 c).

²⁶ "Ce que je dy de la medecine, se peut tirer par exemple generally à toute science. De là est venue cette ancienne opinion des philosophes qui logeoient le souverain bien à la recognoissance de la foiblesse de nostre jugement" (II 12, 470 a).

²⁷ "C'est un très-grand avantage pour l'honneur de l'ignorance que la science mesme nous rejette entre ses bras, quand elle se trouve empeschée à nous roidir contre la pesanteur des maux" (II 12, 160 a).

²⁸ "Pero si po dir quella esser vera arte che non pare esser arte; né più in altro si ha da poner studio, che nel nasconderla: perché se è scoperta, leva in tutto il credito e fa l'omo poco estimado" (B. Castiglione, *Il libro del Cortegiano*, 60).

²⁹ "La participation que nous avons à la connoissance de la verité, quelle qu'elle soit, ce n'est pas par nos propres forces que nous l'avons acquise. Dieu nous a assez appris cela par les tesmoins qu'il a choisi du vulgaire, simples et ignorans, pour nous instruire de ses admirables secrets: nostre foy ce n'est pas nostre acquest, c'est un pur present de la liberalité d'autrui. Ce n'est pas par discours ou par nostre entendement que nous avons receu nostre religion, c'est par autorité et par commandement estranger. La foiblesse de nostre jugement nous y aide plus que la force, et nostre aveuglement plus que nostre clervoyance. C'est par l'entremise de nostre ignorance plus que de nostre science que nous sommes sçavans de ce divin sçavoir" (II 12, 479 a).

physiognomy (III 12, 1034 c). He here adopts the positions of Cues, of Erasmus, and of the didactic literature of his age that discusses whether knowledge necessarily leads to moral excellence. Differing from his intellectual precursors, Montaigne grants Pyrrhonism the status of a useful “new philosophy” because it keeps the mind in suspension of judgment, while occupying it with the pleasure of the perpetual chase, thus possibly preparing it for grace.³⁰ The example of Democritus who had eaten figs that tasted of honey and was deprived of the pleasure of finding the cause for their sweetness by a servant-girl must probably be regarded as a portrait of the author himself.

In addition to lack of knowledge, he continues, we suffer from a lack of words. So would the Pyrrhonians, for example, have to invent a new language in order to be able to express their doubt adequately.³¹ Since the Pyrrhonians cannot express their doubt, we likewise cannot presume to comprehend God by means of the conceptual apparatus we have inherited. Therefore, our attempts to define God by analogy and conjecture are folly. The total character of the world, which becomes evident from these passages, is chaos. Our categories, which serve to establish order, form, beauty, and wisdom are nothing but “aesthetic anthropomorphisms”; this also applies to those appearances which we name God.³²

At the center of the essay we find an address to the reader in the form of a sermon.³³ Montaigne here lays down the rule for man’s relationship to God: it is complete submission of the will. In the second part of the essay that follows, the author in many places mirrors the topics of the first part. He continues symmetrically with a history of the images of God that according to his judgment are blasphemous. He once again questions our ability to know anything at all. Knowledge, as he maintains, is nothing but make-up. Doctrines are construed on the basis of authority and trust (“par autorité et à crédit”) instead of on the basis of experience. Yet even if experience were the foundation of our intellectual works, we would not possess the language to lay it down. Any impression of certitude we may

³⁰ “Il ne faut pas trouver estrange si gens desesperez de la prise n’ont pas laissé de avoir plaisir à la chasse: l’estude estant de soy une occupation plaisante, et si plaisante que, parmy les voluptez, les Stoïciens defendent aussi celle qui vient de l’exercitation de l’esprit, y veulent de la bride, et treuvent de l’intemperance à trop sçavoir” (II 12, 490 a).

³¹ II 12, 508 a.

³² *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* (109) expresses similar thoughts.

³³ There is a marked change of style and address in the text (II 12, 504 c) which becomes very obvious in the passage following: “Quoy! Dieu nous a-il mis en mains les clefs et les derniers ressorts de sa puissance?”

want to convey is therefore folly. Nietzsche's fable "Über das Pathos der Wahrheit" illustrates this problem by presenting some remote corner of space, filled with glimmering solar systems, where there was once a star. On this star clever animals were inventing recognition. This was the most presumptuous and dishonest minute of world history, yet only a minute. After several breaths of nature the star froze and the clever animals had to die. It was high time: for although they prided themselves on having already recognized a lot, they had finally, to their great discontent, discovered that they had recognized everything incorrectly. They died, and in dying cursed truth. This was the way of the desperate animals that had invented recognition. Nietzsche concludes that such would be the lot of man if he merely relied on his reason.³⁴

In his natural state, Montaigne maintains, the human being is ignorant of himself both physically and spiritually.³⁵ He forms his knowledge on the basis of both the senses and the spirit.³⁶ His judgment is much more influenced by his physical condition than by his intellectual faculties.³⁷ The greatest works of art, therefore, are created without the help of reason, but through inspiration, in ecstasy.³⁸ Consequently, scientific instinct is an unreasoning instinct. Montaigne presents a list of possible definitions of man's highest goods:³⁹ virtue, voluptuousness, nature, science, lack of pain, honesty, and Pyrrhonism, leading to ataraxia. The stoic ideal may prepare the soul for faith, he repeats; but at this stage, the reader is aware of the author's treatment of the concept of faith in the preceding passages.

The *Apologie* ends with Montaigne's favorite topic concerning the union of body and soul or the double nature of things that is already found in Heraclitus and Protagoras.⁴⁰ In the shape of reason and passion, "les sciences" and "les sens", "corps et âme", "raison desraisonnable", "docta ignorantia", it has to be accepted as the basis of human life.⁴¹ The human being represents change and consequently has only inadequate tools for the judgment of phenomena.

The preceding pages have shown that Montaigne's *Apologie de Raymond Sebond* makes science, skepticism, and fideism participate in a pro-

³⁴ KSA 1, 759.

³⁵ II 12, 539 c.

³⁶ II 12, pp. 541.

³⁷ II 12, 547 a.

³⁸ II 12, 551 c.

³⁹ II 12, 561 a.

⁴⁰ II 12, 569 c.

⁴¹ II 12, 571 a.

vocative interchange that is protected by the notion of adiaphora. Montaigne's fideistic declarations must be regarded as strategic. Skepticism in his hands becomes a method akin to doctrine. Science, as we have seen, is a shifter in the French language at the time when Montaigne writes his *Essais* and can be applied to theology as well as to the rising natural sciences. Whenever it is used in the sense of the latter, it reflects the author's distrust of contemporary scientific findings:

et, de nostre temps, Copernicus a si bien fondé cette doctrine, qu'il s'en sert très-regléement à toutes les consequences Astronomiques. Que prendrons nous de là, sinon qu'il ne nous doit chaloir le quel ce soit des deux? Et qui sçait qu'une tierce opinion, d'icy à mille ans, ne renverse les deux precedentes (II 12, 553 a)?

and in our own time Copernicus has given such a good basis to this doctrine that he can legitimately draw all the right astronomical inferences from it. What lesson are we to learn from that, except not to worry about which of the two opinions may be true? For all we know, in a thousand years' time another opinion will overthrow them both (642).

Faced with the dissolution of the old world view and with the rise of a wealth of new knowledge that surpasses the forces of the human intellect, Montaigne turns his attention toward that which is near and begins to re-define the place of the human being and his characteristic trait, that is, reason. Pyrrhonian skepticism is a legitimate way to see the world, yet it is dangerous because of its negativity and, indeed, comes very close to the nihilism that is the foundation of Nietzsche's thought.

[C]ar ce dernier tour d'escrime icy, il ne le faut employer que comme un extreme remede. C'est un coup desesperé, auquel il faut abandonner vos armes pour faire perdre à vostre adversaire les siennes, et un tour secret, duquel il se faut servir rarement et reservément. C'est grande temerité de vous perdre vous mesmes pour perdre un autre. [...] Nous secouons icy les limites et dernieres clotures des sciences, ausquelles l'extremité est vitiée, comme en la vertu. Tenez vous dans la route commune, il ne faict mie bon estre si subtil et si fin (II 12, 540 a).

The ultimate rapier-stroke which I am using here must only be employed as a remedy of last resort. It is a desperate act of dexterity, in which you must surrender your own arms to force your opponent to lose his. It is a covert blow which you should only use rarely and with discretion. It is rashness indeed to undo another by undoing yourself. [...] Here we have now reached the limits and very boundaries of knowledge, where (as in

the case of Virtue) extremes become vices. Keep to the beaten track: it can hardly be good to be so subtle and so clever (628).

Despite his precautions against skepticism pursued to its limits, Montaigne rejects himself the possibility of a transcendent moment and instead undertakes a redefinition of man's position in the universe, thus addressing a problem that Nietzsche summarizes in *Zur Genealogie der Moral*:

Seit Kopernikus scheint der Mensch auf eine schiefe Ebene gerathen, - er rollt immer schneller nunmehr aus dem Mittelpunkt weg - wohin? in's Nichts? in's 'd u r c h b o h r e n d e Gefühl seines Nichts'? (GM 3, 25)

Since Copernicus, man seems to have got himself on an inclined plane - now he is slipping faster and faster away from the center into - what? into nothingness? into a 'penetrating sense of his nothingness'?

According to Nietzsche, Copernicus' overcoming of the traditional theological worldview has not led to a rejection of the beyond. The human being has not undertaken a transvaluation of his own worth on the basis of his newly acquired knowledge. Trapped by his own experience and distrustful of it, he has dismissed the value of human intelligence and has devalued himself in all the fields that are touched by human science. The ensuing state of nihilism is a common state of mind.⁴² It manifests itself in a fruitless search for the meaning of existence and in a devaluation of the highest values. According to Nietzsche, there are two forms of nihilism. Active nihilism is a proof of heightened intellectual power. It may be a sign of strength and as such become a destructive force. It may also symbolize decline and decadence of the intellect and testify to a person's incapacity to set himself an aim, as does, for example, the passive nihilism of Buddhism. Both active and passive nihilism represent pathological intermediate stages of the intellect.

Nietzsche's underlying presupposition is the absence of truth, of any "thing in itself". He regards this axiom as the most extreme nihilism that can be thought out. Every belief, every taking-for-truth is necessarily wrong, because a true world does not exist. Belief is, therefore, a perspectival illusion made up by man.⁴³ The active nihilism prescribed by Nietzsche as a remedy to an epochal illness is equivalent to the will to nothingness which, transformed into the will to power, construes a ficti-

⁴² KSA 12, 350 [35].

⁴³ KSA 12, 354 [41].

tious world; it is then all the more easy to judge and reject the real world as a member of the new fictitious one. Yet this condemnation of the world provokes self-condemnation and finally leads to the self-destruction of the nihilist, for the nihilist's becoming conscious of his own nihilistic state of mind causes a shock: he shivers at his own discovery of the world's falseness, emptiness, and lack of ideals. Next he goes through a passionate phase of negation that corresponds to a desire for affirmation. Then follows a phase of contempt. This finally results in a catastrophe of doubt: might not truth be divine? might not the value of things consist in that they are false? might one not believe in God precisely because he does not exist?⁴⁴ Even greater is his shock at recognizing nihilism to be an epochal illness. Accordingly, *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* (125) has the madman announce the death of God to the people in the marketplace, because the madman is a person who cannot be taken to account for his apocalyptic speech.

Nihilism is the discrepancy between our experience of the world and the conceptual means we have inherited to interpret it. Nietzsche's "Wie die 'wahre Welt' endlich zur Fabel wurde"⁴⁵ illustrates the increasing inadequacy of human language and the gradual dissolution of our articulateness in the face of metaphysical decay. What is considered as truth is, in general, refracted into thousands of perspectival truths. What we call morality is founded on immoral motives; consequently, in its active form, nihilism provides the opportunity for a revolution in language and knowledge. The fact that the "teachers of the purpose of existence" are losing their subject-matter because from now on existence is meaningless, as Nietzsche maintains in the first aphorism of *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, forces the Dionysian man, who considers nihilism as a test of his forces, to find a new way of expressing himself. Similarly, science, that in general has to be seen as causing pain, might have its counterforce be discovered, that is, its immense ability to create starworlds of joy (*FW* 12).

Nietzsche's critique of contemporary science culminates in his proposal to transform the scientific method into an art of living.⁴⁶ Scientific findings do not convey knowledge about being; the possession of methodical certainty does not equal the possession of truth but equals a permanent search for truth; scientific certitude should incorporate relativity; science is not an end in itself, cannot furnish a purpose for life; science cannot

⁴⁴ See the diary of the nihilist in Nietzsche's unpublished writings (*KSA* 13, 139 [327]).

⁴⁵ *KSA* 6, 80.

⁴⁶ *FW* 78, 99, 107, 113, 299, 356.

legitimate itself;⁴⁷ for all these reasons it should help create an attitude and go hand in hand with art's will to appearance. Being the first absolute nihilist of Europe, Nietzsche has already left nihilism behind, nihilism that will influence Europe for the coming two hundred years and will then be replaced by the transvaluation of values.

If we now return to Montaigne, we may see him as an active nihilist. His fideistic profession of faith enables him to engage in a play with concepts which will cancel each other out but which demonstrate that human reason constantly is engaged in similar intellectual occupations. Even though the result of intellectual inquiry is that one cannot know one's self nor the nature of the universe, the nature of man - being endowed with reason - is such that he will always outline substitute worlds. He attempts to compensate for the loss of the center that was caused by the discoveries of Copernicus and to advance his own revaluation of the position of the human being through an atomistic view of the universe.

⁴⁷ *GM* 3, 23ff; K. Jaspers, *Nietzsche*, 152ff.

CHAPTER SIX

HISTORY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Was der einzelne Montaigne in der Bewegtheit des Reformations-Geistes bedeutet, ein In-sich-zur-Ruhe kommen, ein friedliches Für-sich-sein und Ausathmen - und so empfand ihn gewiss sein bester Leser, Shakespeare - das ist jetzt die Historie für den modernen Geist (KSA 1, 444).

What Montaigne as a single individual means to the spiritual agitation of the Reformation, an achieving of serenity with itself, a peaceful being-for-itself and relaxation - and this is certainly how his best reader, Shakespeare, saw him - this is what history now means to the modern spirit.

History as Montaigne writes it emerges from autobiography.¹ Autobiographical writing, I would like to maintain in a preliminary definition, constitutes the self; it construes an author's identity through an interactive process that involves experience, the book or personal library, and memory.² In the *Essais*, this process is partly initiated by a manner of writing

¹ That history is written on the basis of the stories of people and thus often on the basis of literary texts is expressed by Jean-Paul Sartre: "Je suis mon passé" (*L'Être et le néant*, Paris, 1943, 159).

² In order to justify my own interpretation of autobiography I will briefly indicate some current definitions which, however, have not helped me in my analyses: An autobiography is the account of an individual life. It can be distinguished from the autoportrait, in which the self reflects the structure of the world in the same way the microcosm reflects the structure of the macrocosm. According to M. Beaujour's *Miroirs d'encre: rhétorique de l'autoportrait*, autobiography and autoportrait oppose each other, as do speculum and allegory (31). For Beaujour, every autoportrait, such as Montaigne's *Essais*, is a "conscience sans miroir" (38), a text that does not aim at portraying a persona, but that instead seeks to replace each newly constituted self by another mask, be it another ancestor, contemporary, or fictitious individual. P. De Man ("Autobiography as De-facement") interprets autobiography as a substitution of tropes, whereas P. Lejeune defines it as follows in *Le pacte autobiographique*: "Récit rétrospectif en prose qu'une personne réelle fait de sa propre existence, lorsqu'elle met l'accent sur la vie individuelle, en particulier sur l'histoire de sa personnalité" (14). E. Bruss ("L'autobiographie considérée comme acte littéraire") attempts to establish three rules for autobiography concerning the double role of the writer, the truth of the given facts, and the honesty of the author.

based on the author's dialogue with texts as well as with people, in the course of which Montaigne finds out what he is to himself as well as what the others are to him. Partly, this process is facilitated by the use of exempla, metaphors, and by a particular notion of representation, all of which contribute to the emergence of the textual self as multiple. One of the facets of Montaigne's multiple personality is Socrates. Another is the

Earlier attempts to define a genre of autobiography are much less influenced by a rhetorical approach. In *Design and Truth in Autobiography*, R. Pascal claims autobiography to be the reconstruction of that moment or part of a life, in which the past takes on a coherent shape (9). The coherence and rationalization of lives in the autobiography, seen as positive features in Pascal's book, are disadvantages for G. Gusdorf. His important article "Conditions et limites de l'autobiographie" enumerates the three aims of autobiography: to reconstitute and decipher a life with a view to self-knowledge; to serve the purpose of self-examination; and to perform a second reading of the author's experience, while at the same time symbolizing the act of the author's becoming conscious of experience (114).

Gusdorf's definition of autobiography seems to have been influenced by W. Dilthey's notion of self-contemplation. Since the course of a life, as Dilthey sees it, is composed of several units, which, in their turn, are made up of experiences, the autobiographer must restrict their number and establish links in order to write a coherent text. The resulting work is not simply an act of representation, but one of hermeneutical understanding in full knowledge of the individual and his life. Dilthey also strongly influenced G. Misch's *History of Autobiography in Antiquity*. For Misch, an autobiographer's choice of events and people, the way in which he sees his life as a whole, the way in which he gives structure to his work by emphasizing certain actions and subordinating others, and the way in which he deals with the problem of self-deception all contribute to the specific identity of his personality and of the personality's rhetorical form. It constitutes the 'spirit' of a text. Misch's definition makes it very clear that it is an author's style which indicates his particular relation to his own past. This idea has been developed by J. Starobinski ("Le style de l'autobiographie") who maintains that the original quality of autobiographical style is its not being bound to memory as well as the arbitrary character of its narration, which depicts change. On the one hand, this style is a principle of deformation or falsification. On the other hand, it expresses how, from a self other than the present one, the author has found his present self. The narrator's account of his own conversion presupposes a high level of consciousness, that would, in the ideal case and despite the fact that it is virtually impossible to retrieve the past without consciously or unconsciously changing it, enable the author to preserve an impartial and objective attitude with regard to his own life, so as to view it in a detached way (A. Maurois, *Aspects of Biography*, 149). A very recent approach to the genre of autobiography is G. Mathieu-Castellani's *La scène judiciaire de l'autobiographie*. Here the autobiographical situation corresponds to the confession made to a judge or to the Judge. Thus, autobiography, as can be claimed on the basis of texts by Augustine, Rousseau, Roy, Genet, Althusser, and Bergman, is a process, its matrix is the judicial discourse, and its mode of writing is defensive.

persona of the old man who prepares to die.³ As Montaigne's interest in the peasants grows toward the end of his life, he adopts himself certain features of a man from the lower classes and thus adds yet another aspect to his personality.⁴ Socrates exemplifies the perfect death, goodness underneath ugliness, utter modesty combined with highest knowledge, as well as his contemporaries' tragic failure to appreciate his genius. Similarly, the peasant in Montaigne's writing becomes a representative of modesty.⁵ Writing history, according to Montaigne, thus means drawing a portrait of the self in the process of becoming what one is. The self-portrait in evolution may even, in a far-reaching interpretation of Nietzsche's art of living, trace the development of the personality into other than what one is. This enables Montaigne to accept what I would for the moment call contingency, not with the help of religion as might be expected,⁶ but by means of a depiction of contemporary history mediated through the self, adapted and incorporated into a present tense narrative.⁷

Thus, I would claim, the study and discussion of history replaces faith for Montaigne. Initially beginning his *Essais* with lists of historical examples, the author later turns to the self as the basis for his historical reflexions. Yet for reasons of personal security, he depicts an autobiographical self in the process of becoming, and with a view to Nietzsche's attempt at self-construction that is time-defying in more than one sense, even of becoming other than what he is. This specific technique of self-portrayal, which plays with the use of an unhistorical present, will then constitute the basis of Montaigne's 'new' notion of history that emerges from the genre of the essay.

³ H. Friedrich, *Montaigne*, 18. This is a topos that is found in Cicero (Cato maior), Plinius' letters as well as Seneca's ("otium cum litteris", *Ep.* 82), Petrarch, and Rabelais (Thélème).

⁴ "Je propose une vie basse et sans lustre, c'est tout un" (III 2, 782 b); "Entre ma façon d'estre vestu, et celle d'un païsant de mon païs, je trouve bien plus de distance qu'il n'y a de sa façon à un homme qui n'est vestu que de sa peau" (I 36, 222 c); "Les paysans simples sont honnestes gens" (I 54, 299 c); "Les meurs et les propos des paysans je les trouve communément plus ordonnez selon la prescription de la vraie philosophie, que ne sont ceux de nos philosophes" (II 17, 644 c); see also the entire essay III 13, where Montaigne describes the simplicity of his habits.

⁵ With regard to Socrates and the peasant as representatives of modesty see passim H. Glidden's article "The Face in the Text: Montaigne's Emblematic Self-Portrait (*Essais* III 12)".

⁶ H. Lübke, *Geschichtsbegriff und Geschichtsinteresse*, 291.

⁷ G. Nakam, "Les temps en miroir ou les dialogues du passé et du présent".

Contingency

History, as well as the study of history, aid us to accept the experience of contingency.⁸ This statement may tentatively be read into the project of Montaigne's *Essais*. For, as is shown in the *Apologie de Raimond Sebond*, the human being is left on his own in a contingent world. The world itself, or a possible multitude of worlds, may even be contingent, Montaigne suggests in the same essay, where he also implies that God is not present in the here and now, maybe not even in the beyond - if a beyond exists at all in the opinion of the author, who never mentions the afterlife nor discusses resurrection. In any case, God cannot be defined by man, and even if he were to be described by means of human language, he would not be compelled by prayer.⁹ Even though theology, in the opinion of Montaigne, is one of the most important subject-matters,¹⁰ it can, nevertheless, not deceive about the absence of the divine from the world. This absence is suggested not only by Montaigne's skepticism, by his rejection of divine copia, and by his substitution of nature for God,¹¹ but also by his unswerving use of the concept of fortune despite the critique of the Roman Censors.¹² The skeptical and elusive nature of Montaigne's art of synthe-

⁸ This, as I see it, is the thesis of an article by H. Lübke, "Historie als Kultur der Kontingenzerfahrung", in: *Geschichtsbegriff und Geschichtsinteresse*, 269-291. Lübke rephrases the topos *historia magistra vitae* (Cicero, *De oratore* II 9, 36). With regard to this topos see R. Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten*, 38-66. Making Lübke's sentence the point of departure of my chapter will allow me to go beyond the admirable and much quoted article by K. Stierle ("L'Histoire comme Exemple, l'Exemple comme Histoire"), that links historical reflexions with reflexions on the novel; Stierle sees Montaigne's originality in recognizing that history is "magistra vitae" only in so far as it does not teach a well-defined lesson. In addition, my approach will allow me to develop Stierle's claim that in the last essays Montaigne's "moi prend la place de l'histoire comme domaine propre des histoires garanties" (196). For a historical outline of the concept of contingency see the corresponding article in J. Ritter, *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, as well as A. Heuss, "Kontingenz in der Geschichte".

⁹ "[S]i Dieu lui preste extraordinairement la main" (II 12, 589 a).

¹⁰ "Depuis que je suis nay, j'ai veu trois et quatre fois rechanger celles [les lois] des Anglois, nos voisins, non seulement en subject politique, qui est celuy qu'on veut dispenser de constance, mais au plus important subject qui puisse estre, à sçavoir de la religion" (II 12, 563 a).

¹¹ H. Friedrich, *Montaigne*, pp. 296.

¹² 'Fortune' stands for several things in the *Essais*: for the nature of one's personal circumstances at any given time; for a goddess, subject of pagan poetry, personification of chance, mother of gods, who presides over men at their birth and confers upon them their destiny; therefore she represents a threat to belief in divine Providence, or in the

sis, which is made possible as well as rendered inoffensive by the deceptively modest form of the essay, permits the author to preserve or maintain the insignificance of the serious issues he deals with. Thus, he may be said, for example, to use the anti-Platonism that is typical of the essay as a masked critique of Christianity.¹³ His rejection of the Platonic ideal allows him to use metaphor as the ideal didactic means for a shrewd teaching of judgment. His ostensible rhetoric of privacy can be revealed as artful by the existence of another strategic device, that of *adiaphora*, which permits Montaigne to dismantle both the fideistic and the skeptical positions.

That Montaigne's fundamentally despondent outlook on reality denies the presence of a divine plan on earth may also be demonstrated by pointing to the well-known "Nous n'allons point, nous rodons plustost, et tournoions çà et là. Nous nous promenons sur nos pas" (III 6, 885 b) ("We cannot be said to progress but rather to wander about this way and that. We follow our own footsteps" [1027]). Similar to the Protestant world view of the epoch, that rejects the notion of a universe endowed with creative faculties, history is here denied evolution.¹⁴ The Lutheran notion of the will, that does not affect our salvation and that accordingly renders human action worthless, creates a particular notion of history. It is this lack of teleology advocated by the Protestants that must be made responsible for Montaigne's depiction of history as an independent and unpredictable force, and maybe even as fortune itself, in the *Essais*. Montaigne goes so far as to recommend including history in the curriculum as an independent subject-matter of equal value as the mechanical and liberal arts in "De l'institution des enfans" (I 26).¹⁵ "De l'expérience", the author's

freedom of the human will (M. Smith, *Montaigne and the Roman Censors*, 23-35). D. Martin (*Montaigne et la fortune*) analyzes the sources of Montaigne's use of fortune, the stylistic use the author makes of them, and the psychological influence of the concept. He sees Montaigne as the son of fortune (II 11), as a fortunate and lucky man whose self (*animus*) masters fortune (*anima*); Montaigne's goddess is kindly disposed toward him but unkindly disposed toward others; she is a mother figure or wet-nurse, and even the author's muse.

¹³ J. Zeitlin, translation of the *Essais* 1934-36, vol II 51. In a similar way, Nietzsche maintains that the European's battle against Platonism is a battle against Christianity, for "Christenthum ist Platonismus für's 'Volk'" (KSA 5, 12).

¹⁴ C. Dubois, *La conception de l'histoire en France au XVI^e siècle*, pp. 27. Two examples are Philippe Melancthon's *In obscuriora aliquot capita Geneseos Annotationes* and Martin Luther's *In primum librum Mose Enarrationes*.

¹⁵ This may be innovative and derive from the recent invention of a method by Bodin (for a description of the 'method' in Montaigne see H. Pfeiffer, "Synkrisis - Spiele der Urteilskraft"; E. Ancelewicz, "'C'est tousjours un tour de l'humaine capacité': la no-

last essay, will now briefly illustrate how Montaigne tries to seize and describe the moment in history as well as how he considers history to be an experience of contingency.

"De l'expérience" (Essais III 13)¹⁶

In the introductory paragraph to the essay, Montaigne deliberates whether knowledge of truth may be obtained rather through reason or through experience. Both can assume a variety of forms and therefore are inadequate tools. Even a comparative method - the best way of grasping the nature of facts and Montaigne's preferred approach - which would analyze two items with regard to their similarity, would have to fail, because it is impossible to find two objects that agree completely. Indeed, the Greeks and Romans, for whom a nest of eggs was the perfect example of similitude,¹⁷ were proven wrong by a man from Delphi, who could distinguish between them and who even could point out the hen that had laid them. Montaigne follows this by the example of a contemporary card manufacturer; despite his art, this craftsman would be incapable of producing a pack of cards from which an experienced player could not pick out one particular card, just by looking at the different color shades of their backs.

As in the *Apologie de Raimond Sebond*, Montaigne's favorite topic, human knowledge, is here once again linked to that of the recognition of truth. Montaigne proceeds to undo the latter notion in the course of the introductory passage. The paragraph demonstrates Montaigne's consciousness of being a modern, because it presents a familiar topic in origi-

tion d'histoire et le jugement". For a view of the Renaissance concept of history and its development see G. Huppert, *The idea of perfect history*). In *De oratore*, history figures as a branch of rhetoric; R. Landfester defines the place of history within the studia humanitatis in *Historia magistra vitae*, 54-62.

¹⁶ Recent interpretations of the essay III 13, that all seem to be endeavors to structure the text, are the following: A. Tournon ("J'ordonne à mon âme..." Structure d'essai dans le chapitre 'De l'expérience') describes the last pages of the essay as putting into practice the Socratic morality developed earlier on. C. Dickson's article "L'Invitation de Montaigne au Banquet de la Vie: 'De l'expérience'" looks in particular at the food metaphors and comparisons that serve to make the reader accept his corporeality and that, on a textual level, lend structure to the essay. J. Brody ("From Teeth to Text in 'De l'expérience': A Philological Reading") underlines the symbolical value of Montaigne's language. "When questioned in action and in context, Montaigne's most insignificant, unassuming words often prove to be doing something beyond what they are saying; they are functioning poetically, in the etymological sense of the term" (21).

¹⁷ Augustine, *Soliloquies*, I 9.

nal framework. Not only does the concept of truth turn out not to exist, but Montaigne, through the choice of his examples, deconstructs the Greek and Latin tradition, while tacitly maintaining their terminology, which he then undermines again. It is his second example's overriding the first, Perrozet's confirming the man from Delphi exactly by the flaws in his highly refined craft, that overrules the authority of the classics, puts this paragraph in a humanistic context, and establishes Montaigne as a modern. Montaigne concludes that if reason is insufficient to lead us to truth, experience does not seem to be a more efficient means.

Laws permit us to organize the diversity of facts, opinions, and morals that nature has created.¹⁸ Laws, however, do not lead to the discovery of truth, in particular not when they have been established by man.¹⁹ In addition, human language tends to become unclear in judicial matters, so that any person, who would try to express a matter in legal jargon, is in the same position as those children who try to build with quicksilver.²⁰ The lawyer who is here struggling with the arbitrary character of language may be Montaigne himself both as the king's counselor and as the author of the *Essais*, or the human being in general.

Truth is corrupted by the diversity of legal interpretations. As impossible as it is to find two eggs that are completely alike, as impossible will it be to find two men who interpret one and the same event in exactly the same way. Legal quibbling will only prove the futility of the legal search for truth. Man cannot lay down truth; his destiny is to be perpetually on a quest: this can be seen in the Delphic oracle, which is always ambiguous (1045). In between this positive kind of interpretation and the well-known critique that illustrates the wrong kind of textual quest,²¹ Montaigne inserts the famous lines by La Boétie as a link, thus transforming the poetic difference between invention and imitation into an art of living. Due to our tendency to establish hierarchies of knowledge, he continues, we have created a justice system that is based on dogma and therefore fundamentally unjust. Montaigne then introduces Luther as an example, who produced as much insecurity with regard to his opinions as haunts the French judicial system. This is followed by the example of Socrates, who complains that one question immediately engenders others. Montaigne con-

¹⁸ "Nature s'est obligée à ne rien faire autre, qui ne fust dissemblable" (1042 c).

¹⁹ "Nature les donne tousjours plus heureuses que ne sont celles que nous nous donnons" (1043 b).

²⁰ "[D]es enfans essayans de renger à certain nombre une masse d'argent-vif" (1043 b).

²¹ "Il y a plus affaire à interpreter les interpretations qu'à interpreter les choses".

cludes: "Comme nul evenement et nulle forme ressemble entierement à une autre, aussi ne differe nulle de l'autre entierement" (1047 b) ("Just as no event and no form completely resembles another, neither does any completely differ" [1213]).

A new thesis follows: "Or les loix se maintiennent en credit, non par ce qu'elles sont justes, mais par ce qu'elles sont loix. C'est le fondement mystique de leur autorité; elles n'en ont point d'autre" (1049 b) ("Now laws remain respected not because they are just but because they are laws. That is the mystical basis of their authority. They have no other" [1216]). Since we are incapable of drawing conclusions from our traditional pool of historical and hence unfamiliar examples, examples that do not help us to regulate our lives, we should rather begin by studying a familiar object, that is, ourselves, for the only reliable or binding experience and evidence, according to Montaigne, is self-knowledge.²² Accordingly, Montaigne maintains, he would rather understand himself well by looking at himself than by looking at Cicero (1051). The experience of his personal life provides as much exemplarity as that of Caesar's, for example. It teaches, above all, not to set too great a store by one's knowledge, because first, Montaigne's faulty memory may lead him to forget important data²³ and next, faulty data will influence his judgment.

The art of self-knowledge requires a constant exercise of judgment and consists above all in the recognition that the human condition is one of permanent apprenticeship. Self-knowledge is recommended by Apollo, because it enables to better know others.²⁴ Montaigne's high skill in this art makes him the ideal pedagogue and counsellor of kings (1055). Some considerations on the nature and tasks of a counsellor compared to those of the king provide the conclusion to another one of his favorite conversation topics.

One reason for the genesis of the *Essais* is Montaigne's need to confess, not his sins, but himself as he is, and, to link with an idea from "Du repentir", for reasons of mental health ("pour l'interne santé", 1056 b). Montaigne has acquired unquestionable expertise in the domain of physical and mental health. His experience of health as well as of illness, not to mention that of approaching old age, which announces itself in the loss of a tooth, prompts him to look at the course of the human condition. The

²² "Je m'estudie plus qu'autre subject. C'est ma metaphisique, c'est ma phisique" (1050).

²³ "Les faux pas que ma memoire m'a fait si souvent" (1051).

²⁴ "Cette longue attention que j'employe à me considerer me dresse à juger aussi passablement des autres" (1053 b).

depiction of himself as part of this process, that is interspersed with his preferences at table, constitutes the finale of the *Essais* and represents an invitation to the banquet of life, which was already proffered in the essay “Que philosopher, c’est apprendre à mourir” (I 20). All these examples serve to illustrate his notion of *jouissance*.²⁵ True *jouissance* is attained in mastering the art of enjoying the gift of life until the last minute and to sense this enjoyment; Montaigne terms this art “vivre à propos” (1088), or “passe-temps” (1092), which means “Pour moy donc, j’ayme la vie et la cultive telle qu’il a pleu à Dieu nous l’octroier” (1093) (“As for me, then, I love life and cultivate it as it has pleased God to vouchsafe it to us” [1264]).

In this concluding essay Montaigne’s favorite topics are listed in conversational form for the last time.²⁶ The frame for this symphonic interplay of themes is provided by a double notion of ‘experience’: that of a treasure of practical knowledge acquired in reaction to a series of events (history) is called into question by showing how habits change during a lifetime, how the description of one instant has to be qualified and adjusted by the next moment, and can only ever be accepted partially or with reservations; that of experiment (autobiography) in which the author himself poses as an example whose personal exigencies intersect with his historical ones.

Historical Consciousness

Montaigne likes history only a little less than he likes poetry: “L’Histoire, c’est plus mon gibier, ou la poésie, que j’ayme d’une particuliere inclination” (I 26, 144 a) (“My game-bag is made for history rather, or poetry, which I love, being particularly inclined towards it” [164]).²⁷ Since history and poetry are named together, one might conclude that historians should make pleasant and easy reading. Those historians who “s’amusent plus aux conseils qu’aux evenemens, plus à ce qui part du dedans qu’à ce qui arrive au dehors” (II 10, 396 a) (“linger more over motives than events, over what comes from inside more than what happens outside” [467]) are preferred by Montaigne, because they fulfill this requirement and because

²⁵ “Quand je dance, je dance; quand je dors, je dors” (1087).

²⁶ A. Thibaudet (*Montaigne*, 246) calls this essay Montaigne’s “testament intellectuel”.

²⁷ The combination of poetry and history recently has been analyzed by M. Demonet-Launay, “Le genre historique dans les *Essais*: quand il s’agit de parler des choses”.

they portray man in his entirety. Thus, he likes Caesar for his personality that emerges from behind his historical writings.

According to Montaigne, the so-called simple historians are narrators and leave the reader to combine and judge the facts they present (II 10). The excellent historians ("bien excellens") have the rhetorical skill ("paroles convenables") to present historical facts as well as to let the reader know their own opinion. A third group of historians consider verba more important than res and simply present a rhetorical and biased account.²⁸ Paradoxically, it is not the authoritative voice of the excellent historians that Montaigne seems to appreciate the most, because, according to him, it falsifies the historical picture: "Ils entreprenent de choisir les choses dignes d'estre sçeues, et nous cachent souvent telle parole, telle action privée, qui nous instruiroit mieux" (II 10, 397 a) ("They take on the task of choosing what is worth knowing, often hiding from us some speech or private action which would have taught us more" [468]). Montaigne can be said to reject monumental history with its indiscriminate worship of tradition as well as antiquarian history, being a mere compilation of facts and documents. He imagines instead a particular "critical history" (simple history) which consists precisely to leaving the reader free to form his own opinion. According to Nietzsche, such critical history is based on historical consciousness. In its positive expression this faculty, which we may compare to Montaigne's 'judgment', displays the capacity to wonder, to think critically, and to have an open mind. It rejects a world view in which the process of world history leads up to modern man. Instead, it favors constant flux.²⁹ Historical consciousness presupposes self-knowledge, that is, an awareness of the self as being in a state of permanent evolution.

According to Montaigne, history must be biographical. As such only is it useful, like Tacitus' history, which portrays customs, private thoughts and motivations that had historical impact:

Les mouvemens publics dependent plus de la conduite de la fortune, les privez de la nostre. C'est plustost un jugement que deduction d'Histoire; il y a plus de preceptes que de contes. Ce n'est pas un livre à lire, c'est un livre à estudier et apprendre (III 8, 920 b).

²⁸ An explanation of this hierarchisation is given by H. Pfeiffer, "Synkrisis - Spiele der Urteilskraft"; see also H. Friedrich, *Montaigne*, pp. 187; Friedrich Nietzsche, "Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben" (KSA 1, 243-334).

²⁹ J. Lacouture's concept of "histoire immédiate" might be mentioned here as a recent definition of historiography (M. Perronet, "Montaigne et l'histoire immédiate").

The unrolling of public events depends more on the guiding hand of Fortune: that of private ones, on our own. Tacitus' work is more a judgment on historical events than a narration of them. There are more precepts than accounts. It is not a book to be read but one to be studied and learnt (1066).

Such particular historiography is a logical result of Montaigne's reading and writing essays.³⁰ The author writes history as a personalized version of historical events. This permits him to record more than mere facts. That is why in his comparisons of French peasants in the Religious Wars to the heroes of Classical Antiquity he finds that the examples of heroism among the members of the lower classes equal and even surpass those celebrated ones of a bygone era. In the essay "Que le goust des biens et des maux depend en bonne partie de l'opinion que nous en avons" (I 14) he explicitly compares the stoic acceptance of death, which he observes in the peasants, to the exemplary death of Socrates; in another example, he praises the people of Milan's steadfast resolution to face death rather than live in continuous insecurity during the Italian Wars:

Et qui s'enquerra à nos argolets des experiences qu'ils ont euës en ces guerres civiles, il se trouvera des effets de patience, d'obstination et d'opiniatreté, par-my nos miserables siecles et en cette tourbe molle et effeminée encore plus que l'Egyptienne, dignes d'estre comparez à ceux que nous venons de reciter de la vertu Spartaine (II 32, 702 a).

And if anyone would go and ask our mounted riff-raff about the experiences which they have had in these civil wars of ours, he will hear of acts of endurance, of obstinate resistance and of stubbornness even among that rabble - effeminate though it is with a more than Egyptian sensuality -

³⁰ In a recent article "Portrait de l'artiste en historien: Montaigne et Plutarque", G. Mathieu-Castellani presents the relationship between history written as life and the essay as one of resemblance and difference (8): "L'essai s'écrit alors contre l'histoire, impliquant un autre rapport à l'évènement: car l'essai s'ouvre au domaine du possible, voire du non advenu" (14); "Montaigne déhistoricise le projet historique pour le faire entrer en coïncidence avec son propre projet" (15). Castellani's earlier article "Lecture (de l'histoire), écriture (de l'essai): le modèle de la Vie" portrays history dehistoricised: "Montaigne choisit en somme de voir dans l'histoire une forme encore bâtarde de l'essai, et dans l'essai une forme supérieure de l'histoire-vie; et s'il semble curieusement négliger les aspects spécifiques du discours historique et oublier sa nécessaire discursivité, c'est qu'il entend faire dans les lacunes l'espace que l'essai va occuper" (87). In *Montaigne et l'écriture de l'essai* Mathieu-Castellani still clearly separates essay and history, describing the former as "obligation" aiming at "exactitude de l'analyse" and the latter as writing that mixes "l'agrément et l'utilité".

worthy of being compared which we have just rehearsed of Spartan valour (820).

The passage compares the terrible suffering among the peasant population to Spartan virtue, paralleling in bitter irony the trained and the untrained, the professional soldier and the innocent victim.

The chapter "Des livres" (II 10) treats of Montaigne's favorite historians and ends with his private annotations on some of them. In the following chapter "De la cruauté" (II 11), Montaigne elaborates on these remarks and presents his own manner of writing history by giving the example of an imprisoned soldier who for fear of being tortured tried to kill himself with a rusty nail.³¹ Montaigne gives a diagnosis of the age describing cruelty as the most disturbing symptom, so that modern history appears to be more sensational than any classical historian could ever be ("et ne voit on rien aux histoires anciennes de plus extreme que ce que nous en essayons tous les jours" [411 a]). An exhortation to humanistic ethics ends this chapter.

It would only be consequent to regard chapters II 16-18 as representing the development of Montaigne's view of historiography that seeks to put into practice humanistic values. In these chapters, Montaigne includes historical as well as historiographical reflexions in his text.³² The author quite obviously reacts to the problem that history usually is the history of the victorious party, whereas he chooses to adopt the point of view of the loser, even including himself in the losing party in order to appear as a sympathetic narrator or as a peasant himself. This happens in the essay "De la presumption" (II 17), which introduces Montaigne's self as a historical object that precisely because of its insignificance is worth recording. In the following essay "Du dementir" (II 18), Montaigne defends him-

³¹ "Ces jours passés, un soldat prisonnier ayant apperceu d'une tour où il estoit, qu'en la place, des charpentiers commençoient à dresser leurs ouvrages, et le peuple à s'y assembler, tint que c'estoit pour luy, et, entré en desespoir, n'ayant autre chose à se tuer, se saisit d'un vieux clou de charrette rouillé, que la fortune luy presenta, et s'en donna deux grands coups autour de la gorge; et, voyant qu'il n'en avoit peu esbranler sa vie, s'en donna un autre tantost après dans le ventre, dequoy il tumba en evanouissement" (II 11, 410 c).

³² "Au demeurant, en toute une bataille où dix mill'hommes sont stropiez ou tuez, il n'en est pas quinze dequoy on parle" (II 16, 610 a). "De tant de milliasses de vaillans hommes qui sont morts depuis quinze cens ans en France, les armes en la main, il n'y en a pas cent qui soyent venus à nostre cognoissance". "Nous n'avons pas la millieme partie des escrits anciens; c'est la fortune qui leur donne vie, ou plus courte, ou plus longue, selon sa faveur".

self against those voices who criticize his approach and justifies the particular nature of his self-portrait.³³

Clearly, these chapters establish a chain of thought that leads from a skeptical or even “pathological history,”³⁴ to the example of Montaigne. The fact that Montaigne writes history as autobiography has thus been proven sufficiently.³⁵ In the remaining pages of this chapter I endeavor to define autobiography on the basis of texts by Nietzsche, Augustine, and Petrarch, in order to then, once again, look at Montaigne’s *Essais*.

Memory, Books, and the Self in Nietzsche’s Ecce Homo

For Nietzsche, the role of the memory is to adapt and to integrate ever new facts concerning the self. These facts transform the author’s literary portrait as if they had always been part of his self. The moment Nietzsche captures himself in writing, he creates himself in his own present state as well as in the way he perceives himself in the past, at this moment, and in the future. This does not exclude the possibility that an instant later he portrays himself in yet another way.

Given the fact that Montaigne’s autoportrait, according to his own words, corresponds exactly to the model, to the object traced, he writes the self and goes back in order to rewrite it.³⁶ Nietzsche’s autobiography initially is the account of his life given to himself on the occasion of his 44th birthday: “Und so erzähle ich mir mein Leben” (KSA 6, 263) (“and so I tell my life to myself”). Once we accept the preface, where Nietzsche alludes to the fictional elements in his text and to a particular treatment of time, we see that the text as a construct challenges the implied reader, who

³³ “Et quand personne ne me lira, ay-je perdu mon temps de m’estre entretenu tant d’heures oisives à pensements si utiles et agreables? Moulant sur moy cette figure, il m’a fallu si souvent dresser et composer pour m’extraire, que le patron s’en est fermey et aucunement formé soy-mesmes” (II 18, 647 c).

³⁴ “Unser Ausgangspunkt ist der vom einzigen bleibenden und für uns möglichen Zentrum, dem duldenden, strebenden und handelnden Menschen, wie er ist und immer war und sein wird; daher unsere Betrachtung gewissermassen pathologisch sein wird”. J. Burckhardt, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 7, 3.

³⁵ G. Mathieu-Castellani’s articles in note 21 trace a development from separating history and essay to combining the two, whereas I see history and autobiography as inextricably linked in the *Essais*.

³⁶ “Les autres forment l’homme; je le recite” (III 2, 782 b); “Je n’enseigne point, je raconte” (III 2, 784 b).

is meant to prove his ability to read philologically.³⁷ As a result, the subtitle of the autobiography, "Wie man wird, was man ist", indicates that Nietzsche, who, like Montaigne, considers being as a steadily evolving process, seems to lead the Montaignean movement *ad absurdum* by setting himself the task of discovering something that has not yet been created, as well as, redefining the notion of being as something that is permanently becoming. In order to intensify this effect of paradox or time shift, that Nietzsche derives from a combination of "Russian fatalism", "Buddhism", and "amor fati" - which he translates as "taking yourself as a fate" ("sich selbst wie ein Fatum nehmen") -, Nietzsche chooses to disclose biographical data that is contemporaneous with the composition of *Ecce Homo* and that accordingly imparts relatively little about his life preceding it. The facts he does reveal are, as frequently has been remarked, apparently arbitrary or at least of minor importance for the overall course of Nietzsche's career.³⁸

The Self: Ecce Homo and Antichrist

Nietzsche's ability to change perspectives is the trait that, in his view, makes him a teacher. It is based on his "double origin", which simply means having had father and mother, as well as on a crisis that he successfully faces. That the crisis happens at the same age as his father's death, explains that the author feels more akin to his father than to his mother and sister, whom he despises. As a result, the reader is prepared for Nietzsche's choosing elective affinities later on in the text, such as Caesar, Alexander, Dionysos, and Cosima Wagner. This crisis, that is, an illness, has given Nietzsche a knowledge of decadence and has refined his senses and judgment to such a degree that he has in all truth acquired a double nature (*EH I 1*).³⁹

³⁷ "[E]in Leser, wie ich ihn verdiene, der mich liest, wie gute alte Philologen ihren Horaz lesen" (*KSA* 6, 305). "Wenn ich mir das Bild eines vollkommenen Lesers ausdenke, so wird immer ein Unthier von Muth und Neugierde daraus, ausserdem noch etwas Biegsames, Listiges, Vorsichtiges, ein geborner Abenteurer und Entdecker" (*KSA* 6, 303).

³⁸ He mentions, for example, the recent acquaintance of Heinrich v. Stein and a text written by Lou Andreas-Salomé, but says comparatively little about his relationship with Wagner.

³⁹ "Von der Kranken-Optik aus nach g e s ü n d e r e n Begriffen und Werthen, und wiederum umgekehrt aus der Fülle und Selbstgewissheit des r e i c h e n Lebens hinuntersehn in die heimliche Arbeit des Décadence-Instinkts [...]" (*KSA* 6, 266).

Similar to Montaigne, who says “Je m’estudie plus qu’autre subject. C’est ma metaphisique, c’est ma phisique” (III 13, 1050 b) (“I study myself more than any other subject. That is my metaphysics; that is my physics” [1217]), Nietzsche develops a formula that promotes illness as a stimulus for life and regards the will to health as a metaphysics. Health thus becomes a viewpoint on illness, and illness becomes a viewpoint on health. This perspectivism is illustrated in a syllogism, which in less overdrawn form could also be found in Montaigne: Nietzsche here defines what he calls a well turned-out human being (“wohlgeratener Mensch”) and then judges that the reason for his being the opposite of a decadent is that he has described himself as the paradigm of such a well turned-out human being a moment ago (*EH* I 2). Montaigne chooses the following example to describe a wise man:

nulle assiette moyenne, s’emportant tousjours de l’un à l’autre extreme par occasions indivinables, nulle espece de train sans traverse et contrariété merveilleuse, nulle faculté simple; si que, le plus vraysemblablement qu’on en pourra feindre un jour, ce sera qu’il affectoit et estudioit de se rendre cogneu par estre mescognoissable (III 13, 1054 c).

never in a middle position, always flying to one extreme or the other for causes impossible to divine; no kind of progress without astonishing side-tracking and back-tracking; none of his aptitudes straightforward, such that the most true-to-life portrait you will be able to sketch of him one day will show that he strove and studied to make himself known as unknowable (1222).

The Heraclitean flux of existence prevents Montaigne from ever making himself perfectly known to his reader and motivates his perspectival self-portraits. Consequently, the experience that he gains in the course of a lifetime remains only ever momentarily valid. That we always need to preserve a skeptical attitude toward our experience, because we are not perceptive enough to see the absolute flux of events, is the reason which causes Nietzsche to draw the consequences from Montaigne’s experiment and to embody himself the metaphysical concepts that he develops in his work: he stages them as interactive concepts by means of his personal illness and health, thus performing a physiological interpretation of the notion of the double in ever different expressions.

Nietzsche’s claim to a noble origin, which is derived from his father’s family, goes hand in hand with an extreme politeness that is linked to an exceptional pedagogical talent (*EH* I 3). Unlike Montaigne, Nietzsche

gives proof of his talent by describing the effect of his teaching on his student Heinrich von Stein. Others of Nietzsche's noble virtues are the capacity to overcome pity ("die kurzsichtigen Antriebe der selbstlosen Handlungen"), and a particular manner of retribution ("ich schicke einen Topf mit Konfitüre, um eine saure Geschichte loszuwerden"). Nietzsche is proud to be of a warrior nature who uses people as magnifying glasses in order to expose a default of society. Thus, he does not hesitate to parody, criticize, and write polemics against his colleagues and to even provoke the critique and anger of his closest friends. As in dialectical play that is driven to paradox, Nietzsche engages in conversations with contemporaries like Wagner, with literary models like Pascal and Voltaire, and, in a climactic and tragic final performance, with God. At the same time, his interlocutors are set against each other, the last duel being fought between Christ and Antichrist, who both represent facets of Nietzsche's own personality.

Nietzsche's Personal Anthology

Making the right choices in any domain of life is an important part of Nietzsche's art of living. Hence, he not only describes his favorite food and climate, but also his favorite pastime, that is, reading with a view to relaxation (EH II 3). Nietzsche reads French authors mainly, - Pascal, Montaigne, Molière, Corneille, Racine -, and provocatively protects them against the wild Romantic genius Shakespeare. In addition to the French classics, he also reads contemporary French writers, who, together with his own works, have become part of his library (EH III). Nietzsche's exuberant praise of his *Zarathustra*, a text that he regards as both the highest and deepest book ever written (EH Preface 4), may be regarded as an example of his preferred manner of writing. Style being the author's main concern throughout his career, it is also the element that is least developed in his early works. This we might infer from his self-criticism of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, a book that he terms questionable, odd, not easily accessible, impossible, haughty, and effusive. It is in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* that Nietzsche begins to develop two important notions which will guide his writing. One is that of the book as a near impersonation of the human being (KSA 2, 171). This reverses a Platonic topos in that it sees as positive the independence of the written word; then, it refers to the writer's physiology which should emerge from the text. The other notion concerns what has been called Nietzsche's active interpretation or

his controversial approach, and regards as a good book the book that at a first glance seems to demolish and is constructive only at a second glance (KSA 2, 386 [16] and 404 [58]). The revolutionary nature advocated by Nietzsche for any text also is the topic of the original motto to Sanctus Januarius (KSA 10, 14 and 35). The poem "Meinem Leser" in *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* illustrates how closely Nietzsche's poetic theory resembles Montaigne's style: "Ein gut Gebiss und einen guten Magen - Di-ess wünsch ich dir! Und hast du erst mein Buch vertragen, Verträgst du dich gewiss mit mir!" (KSA 3, 365) ("I am the cook. Good teeth, strong stomach with you be! And once you have got down my book, You should get on with me"); a text is the expression of an author's physiological make-up and accordingly consubstantial with him.

Nietzsche creates himself as a "Gegensatz-Natur", and thus attempts to assimilate and to surpass his literary ancestors. As a result, he uses the paradox and an often hyperbolic style; his personality, that has been shaped by literature and on the basis of opposites, necessarily lacks unity, similar to his work. Nietzsche's self develops through fragmentary mastery of literary models, yet the book that he writes is not meant to be mistaken for his self. This is not even the case when he speaks of himself in the first person, for he reminds his readers "Das Eine bin ich, das Andre sind meine Schriften" (KSA 6, 298) ("I am one thing, my writings are another matter"). His emphasis on not wanting to be mistaken for somebody else, his certainty of not being understood, his conviction of being born posthumously all explain that none of the self-portraits Nietzsche has developed until the publication of *Ecce Homo* are meant to be genuine.

*Augustine: Memory, Experience, and the Book*⁴⁰

In Book VIII of the *Confessiones*, Augustine relates his spiritual change. It is repeated in the vision that he has together with his mother Monica in Milan in Book IX. The religious and moral experience of the vision cre-

⁴⁰ In *Les sources et l'évolution des Essais de Montaigne*, P. Villey calls attention to the many citations from Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*, which Montaigne integrates in the 1595 edition of the *Essais*. He concludes his analysis of the relationship between Augustine and Montaigne with the assumption that, although Montaigne did quote extensively from one of Augustine's works, he cannot have had a thorough knowledge of the *Confessiones* (vol. I 72). The *Essais*, however, may well have been conceived as the confessions of a layman and would consequently have to be regarded as a confrontational imitation of Augustine's text.

ates in Augustine a metaphysical consciousness of his self. This heightened awareness of the self is rhetorically recaptured in Book X. Here an analysis of Augustine's memory exemplifies the birth of a Christian consciousness, which is aware of the human being's dependence on the divine act of creation.

Augustine compares the memory, the soul, the seat of God⁴¹ to the store or warehouse of the soul as well as to its stomach.

Intus haec ago, in aula ingenti memoriae meae. Ibi enim mihi caelum et terra et mare praesto sunt cum omnibus, quae in eis sentire potui, praeter illa, quae oblitus sum. Ibi mihi et ipse occurro meque recolo, quid, quando et ubi egerim quoque modo, cum agerem, affectus fuerim. Ibi sunt omnia, quae sive experta a me sive credita memini. Ex eadem copia etiam similitudines rerum vel expertarum vel ex eis, quas expertus sum, creditarum alias atque alias et ipse contexo praeteritis atque ex his etiam futuras actiones et eventa et spes, et haec omnia rursus quasi praesentia meditor (X 8, 14).

These actions are inward, in the vast hall of my memory. There sky, land, and sea are available to me together with all the sensations I have been able to experience in them, except for those which I have forgotten. There also I meet myself and recall what I am, what I have done, and when and where and how I was affected when I did it. There is everything that I remember, whether I experienced it directly or believed the word of others. Out of the same abundance in store, I combine with past events images of various things, whether experienced directly or believed on the basis of what I have experienced; and on this basis I reason about future actions and events and hopes, and again think of all these things in the present.

The "thesaurus memoriae" thus has a mirror function. The intellectual part of the memory collects facts already known,⁴² remembers sentiments, remembers the act of remembering, and even the act of forgetting.⁴³ The memory is a point of departure that helps Augustine in his search for God. Ultimately, however, all those who want to find God will have to surpass

⁴¹ That memory, soul, and seat of God are one for Augustine becomes clear in X 24-26.

⁴² One of the tasks performed by the memory is 'cogitari' (X 11, 18), which is explained as "dispersione colligenda".

⁴³ Another task is to search for facts, to ruminate (X 14, 22): "Forte ergo sicut de ventre cibus ruminando, sic ista de memoria recordando proferuntur". But the memory is not infallible: "et multa non memini" (III 12, 21) as shows Augustine's endeavor to remember the conflicting sentiments after the death of his friend (IV 6, 11).

the power of memory (X 17, 26), because it can at the most perform a reinterpretation of stored events as always already prefigured or preordained by the divine plan. Throughout the *Confessiones* Augustine provides an abundance of telling examples which establish the memory as the faculty that links the first nine books to the last three, and thus the life of the sinner to the new life after the conversion.

From the first pages of the *Confessiones* we find references to certain points in the future, at which Augustine, for example, will have better understood his own present actions ("Audieram enim ego adhuc puer de 'vita aeterna' promissa nobis per humilitatem domini dei descendentis ad superbiam nostram", I 11, 17; "When I was still a boy, I had heard about eternal life promised to us through the humility of our Lord God, coming down to our pride"; "Nondum amabam et amare amabam et secretiore indigentia oderam me minus indigentem"; III 1, 1; "As yet I had never been in love and I longed to love; and from a subconscious poverty of mind I hated the thought of being less inwardly destitute"). He refers to a time when he will understand Monica's sentiments ("Cum pro me fletet ad te mea mater, fidelis tua, amplius quam flent matres corporea funera", III 11, 19; "For my mother, your faithful servant, wept for me before you more than mothers weep when lamenting their dead children") and Monica's dream ("Quod illa ita se accepisse inter colloquia sua mecum saepe recordabatur, ac si de caelo sonuisset", III 12, 21; "In her conversations with me she often used to recall that she had taken these words as if they had sounded from heaven"). He refers to the moment where his friends will recognize the divine plan. Alypius, for example, who resolves to withstand the bloodthirsty crowd in the circus, and who, nevertheless, is swept away together with his precepts, will only much later recognize this experience to be an act of divine providence: "Et inde tamen manu validissima et misericordissima eruisti eum tu et docuisti eum non sui habere, sed tui fiduciam, sed longe postea" (VI 8, 13) ("Nevertheless, from this you delivered him by your most strong and merciful hand, and you taught him to put his confidence not in himself but in you. But that was much later"); and the next paragraph continues "Verum tamen iam hoc ad medicinam futuram in eius memoria reponebatur" (VI 9, 14) ("This experience, however, rested in his memory to provide a remedy in the future"). Augustine also envisages a time when he will have overcome his own sinfulness; at the moment of the theft of pears this still remains outside his conception: "Ecce cor meum, deus, ecce cor meum, quod miseratus es in imo abyssi" (II 4, 9) ("Such was my heart, O God, such was my heart. You had pity on me when it was at the bottom of the abyss"); as the

prodigal son he asks "Ubi ergomihi tunc eras et quam longe?" (III 6, 11) ("At that time where were you in relation to me?"). Augustine will also acknowledge the death of his friend, whom he seduced with false doctrines, as God's punishment:

Nam et a fide vera, quam non germanitus et penitus adulescens tenebat deflexeram eum in superstitiosas fabellas et perniciosas, propter quas me plangebatur mater. [...] Et ecce tu inminens dorso fugitivorum tuorum, "deus ultionum" et fons misericordiarum simul, qui convertis nos ad te miris modis, ecce abstulisti hominem de hac vita, cum vix explevisset annum inamicitia mea, suavi mihi super omnes suavitates illius vitae meae (IV 4, 7).

For I had turned him away from the true faith, to which, being only young, he had no strong or profound allegiance, towards those superstitions and pernicious mythologies which were the reason for my mother's tears over me. [...] But you were present, immediately at the back of those who flee from you, at once both 'God of vengeance' and fount of mercies: you turn us to yourself in wonderful ways. You took the man from this life when our friendship had scarcely completed a year. It had been sweet to me beyond all the sweetness of life that I had experienced.

Augustine will overcome his inability to conceive of God, and will discard his Platonic definitions (VII 1, 1-2). He will abandon pride "Et haec de vulnere meo creverant, quia 'humiliasti tamquam vulneratum superbum', et tumore meo separabar abs te et nimis inflata facies claudebat oculos meos" (VII 7, 11) ("This grew out of my wound, for 'you have humbled the proud like a wounded man'. My swelling conceit separated me from you, and the gross swelling on my face closed my eyes"). He foresees a point in the future, where he will have triumphed over his incapacity to hold on to God: "Et mirabar, quod iam te amabam, non pro te phantasma, et non stabam frui deo meo, sed rapiebar ad te decore tuo moxque diripiebar abs te pondere meo et ruebam in ista cum gemitu; et pondus hoc consuetudo carnalis" (VII 17, 23) ("I was astonished to find that already I loved you, not a phantom surrogate for you. But I was not stable in the enjoyment of my God. I was caught up to you by your beauty and quickly torn away from you by my weight. With a groan I crashed into inferior things. This weight was my sexual habit").

All these examples illustrate that in looking at itself in Book X of the *Confessiones*, the soul recognizes its dependence on the divine act of creation as well as its remoteness from God. Self-contemplation, consequently, is an attempt at recapturing the presence of the divine; it is tran-

scendence. “Itaque ex quo te didici, manes in memoria mea, et illic te invenio, cum reminiscor tui et delector in te. Hae sunt sanctae deliciae meae, quas donasti mihi misericordia tua respiciens paupertatem meam”, (X 24, 35) (“And so, since the time I learnt of you, you remain in my consciousness, and there I find you when I recall you and delight in you. These my holy delights you have given me, in your mercy looking upon my poverty”).

What writing the *Confessiones* may have meant for Augustine can be illustrated by looking at *De civitate Dei* (XX 14), where the author interprets the Resurrection and the Last Judgment as described in John. The Judgment will be an opening of the books, that is, the sacred books, the commandments, as well as the book of the life of every man. The latter is a record that shows which of the commandments each human being has fulfilled or failed to fulfill during his lifetime. However, the nature of this second book is difficult to determine and Augustine endeavors to interpret it as a simultaneous reading of every man’s life in the present at time-defying speed. Dante renders these images as that of the book of memory in his *Vita nuova* (“libro de la mia memoria”) and, in the *Divina Commedia*, as that of leaves which describe the world and which are bound by love - both God’s and Beatrice’s - into one single volume (“legato con amore in un volume, ciò che per l’universo si squaderna”, *Paradiso* XXX 86). Just as the divine book described by Augustine, Dante’s books are intended to be studied. On the basis of an extended process of interpretation according to the system established by the Church Fathers, the self will be constituted. Writing, for Dante as well as for Augustine, simply serves as an artificial memory that will help them to remember an experience of conversion. Thus, in the first lines of the *Soliloquia*, Reason recommends to Augustine to find something to which he might entrust her instruction. Since Augustine’s memory is not good enough that it will safely keep everything he has thought out, he must resort to writing.

Petrarch: Spiritual Formation, Moral Exemplarity, and the Personal Library

Even though there is no direct influence of Petrarch’s autobiographical works and anthropological writings on Montaigne,⁴⁴ he provides an important step in my hermeneutical model, where Montaigne is framed by

⁴⁴ H. Friedrich, *Montaigne*, 31.

Augustine and Nietzsche. It is the *Familiares* that, among other things, let us gain insight into Petrarch's relationship to books. Books for him are friends that are loved for the thoughts expressed in them (VI 1), that are saddened by his absence (XVII 5), and that not only converse with him but even interact with him, as does his Cicero (XXI 10). Hence, the acquisition of a personal library is a serious matter requiring thorough preparation as well as the help and advice of friends (III 18). Then, the personal library must be put to good use. For one, it helps to form the author's style (I 8). Next, as we are told in "De librorum copia", it is better to read few books and those often, than to read a great quantity of books.

Indeed, reading should be like a conversation. In the preface to the *Secretum*, Petrarch relates how he decided to write down in the form of a book a discussion that he had with his mentor Augustine. The written account will not only serve to remember the details of the talk but also to repeat the experience of conversion that Petrarch had while holding the conversation with the Saint. The ensuing autobiographical text shows how the narrator through his suffering has come to a new understanding of himself.

Montaigne

The humanistic art of reading favored by Petrarch, that recommends reading little and thoroughly for the sake of moral edification, may be contrasted with Montaigne's display of the competent reader's mastery and his pleasure in choosing passages from various books while walking up and down in front of the shelves. For Montaigne, the book does not replace experience, but is used to heighten the reader's awareness of his own self at different stages in the self's development. Thus, Montaigne can turn into Socrates, yet at the same time assert his independence; he may create himself as an example that, however, is not to be imitated by the reader despite its seductiveness.

For Montaigne, as for Augustine, the book replaces memory. Yet Montaigne much more frequently than Augustine discusses his lack of a good memory which prevents him from being a writer, from excelling as a diplomat, and from shining as a scholar. At the same time, this lack largely stimulates and legitimizes his writing. Like Augustine, Montaigne confesses. Although Montaigne's motto of "nosce teipsum" can be compared to Augustine's question "Quid ergo sum, deus meus?" (X 17, 26),

Montaigne's conclusions are of an anthropological nature. For Montaigne, self-analysis is a never-ending search and the self is a process that results from an individual's listening to himself. At the same time, this process unfolds in ever different ways and results in ever different findings ("Si je parle diversement de moy, c'est que je me regarde diversement", II 1, 319 b; "I speak about myself in diverse ways: that is because I look at myself in diverse ways" [377]). For Augustine, however, self-knowledge is synonymous with the knowledge of God and with giving up pride ("Et eunt homines mirari alta montium et ingentes fluctus maris et latissimos lapsus fluminum et Oceani ambitum et gyros siderum, et relinquunt se ipsos nec mirantur", X 8, 15; "People are moved to wonder by mountain peaks, by vast waves of the sea, by broad waterfalls on rivers, by the all-embracing extent of the ocean, by the revolutions of the stars. But in themselves they are uninterested"). Augustine's soul, narrow and in need of being purged at the beginning of his confession ("Angusta est domus animae meae, quo venias ad eam: dilatetur abs te. Ruinosa est: refice eam. Habet quae offendant oculos tuos: fateor et scio", I 5, 6; "The house of my soul is too small for you to come to it. May it be enlarged by you. It is in ruins: restore it. In your eyes it has offensive features. I admit it, I know it"), becomes a clean and empty palace in book X, whereas Montaigne accepts his soul as it is, linked to and dependent on his physical well-being. Augustine's confession formulates a Christian doctrine, that demonstrates what needs to be thought, whereas Montaigne's essays demonstrate what it means to think as a morally responsible human being.⁴⁵

Unlike other authors, Montaigne maintains in the introductory pages to the essay "Du repentir" (III 2), who present themselves to the public by means of their position or some acquired attribute, Montaigne does it by means of his self. Unlike other authors who form man, Montaigne recites or relates him. That is why what he calls his master form ("maistresse forme") is that of ignorance (I 50, 290 c) or, for that matter, some kind of natural form (II 17, 621 a), which is low and best displayed in conversation (III 3, 800 b) and which he sometimes might wish to be different from what it is. At the same time, this master form is that of humanity in general ("chaque homme [...] III 2, 782 b; similar II 32, 703 c). "Somme, me voicy après à achever cet homme, non à en refaire un autre. Par long usage cette forme m'est passée en substance, et fortune en nature" (III 10, 988 b) ("Here, I am in short putting the finishing touches to a particular

⁴⁵ "S. Augustin, Origene et Hippocrates ont publié les erreurs de leurs opinions; moy, encore, de mes moeurs" (III 5, 824 b).

man, not making another one instead. By long accustoming this form of mine has passed into substance and my fortune into nature" [1143]); Montaigne here describes an act of creation that professes to be a mere imitation of a given model. The personality on paper is thus different from as well as similar to the model and to the reader.⁴⁶

This is the freedom which Montaigne claims for the gesture of repeated reassurance that his *Essais* constitute. Beyond being an act of emancipation, an assertion of individuality, they assert the author's independence of mind and body, on a textual level to begin with. The author's distance to both Machiavelli and Gentillet and the development of his own (a)political discourse in the essay "De l'utile et de l'honnête" (III 1) illustrate his manner of asserting himself by means of continuously circumwriting and avoiding his textual patterns. Thus, he patiently and stealthily treads a path for himself, as if he were on one of his favorite walks, a metaphor for writing and even the title of Marie de Gournay's novel *Proumenoir de Monsieur de Montaigne* that was first told on the occasion of walks with the author. The literary act of writing the autobiographical text is, like the philosophical one in the essay "Que philosopher, c'est apprendre à mourir", an act of taming that attempts to rob history of its uncontrollable element, that is, contingency.

⁴⁶ "Comme nul evenement et nulle forme ressemble entierement à une autre, aussi ne differe nulle de l'autre entierement" (III 13, 1047 b); "Et ne fut jamais au monde deux opinions pareilles, non plus que deux poils ou deux grains. Leur plus universelle qualité c'est la diversité" (II 37, 766 a).

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